

BETTER TOGETHER: SOF AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES  
INTEGRATION IN SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE

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General Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

**BETTER TOGETHER: SOF AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES INTEGRATION IN SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE**, by MAJ Jacob B. Saunders, 112 pages.

The U.S. Government faces a spectrum of challenges in a variety of multifaceted geo-political environments that are simply described as complex and volatile. Security Force Assistance is a DoD program under the Security Cooperation umbrella concept that focuses on building the capacity of foreign security forces, with the auspices that such programs effectively prevent conflicts in unstable regions throughout the world. Both special operations and conventional forces have traditionally facilitated separate lines of effort since the DoD first doctrinally instituted these programs in 2009. The lack of conversation as to a combined SOF and CF approach in advisory efforts constitutes a significant gap in the literature, which this research posits to address. SFA consists of a substantial investment in both American taxpayer dollars and military man-power; but does it accomplish the assumptive hypothesis of conflict prevention in certain states? Are there pre-existing geo-political conditions that could indicate if such a program will succeed or fail in a given state? Furthermore, could a SOF and CF unified approach contribute to an advisory program's success? Finally, this research addresses a proposed hypothesis including the conditions for "when and where" SOF and CF should integrate to ensure the success of a SFA program.

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## ACRONYMS

BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BN	Battalion
BPC	Build Partner Capacity
CF	Conventional Forces
COG	Center of Gravity
CTC	Combat Training Center
DoD	Department of Defense
FSF	Foreign Security Forces
HN	Host Nation
I3	Integration, Interoperability, Interdependence
PF	Partner Force
PN	Partnered Nation
SC	Security Cooperation
SF	Special Forces
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFOD-A	Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha
SOF	Special Operations Forces
UAP	Unified Action Partners
U.S.	United States
USG	United States Government



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

The most important military component of the struggle against violent extremists is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we help prepare our partners to defend and govern themselves.

— National Defense Strategy 2008

For the past decade and a half, the United States has fought one war across an undefinable front. Spanning across all six combatant commands, the conflict evolved from a conventional military incursion to a full spectrum ideological competition and, some would argue, a culture war. This war, the longest in U.S. history, has presented a series of complex challenges as characterized through the emergence of “gray zone” conflicts and a confrontation to the American paradigm of democratic manifest destiny. With the overthrow of the Hussein Regime in Iraq, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, American political and military leadership found our egalitarian principles, which translate well in the Western perspective, resonate quite differently in the Middle East and other locations throughout the world. What many U.S. leaders thought would be a short military expedition turned into a grueling counter-insurgency campaign, which incorporated all elements of U.S. national power and spanned across the range of military operations.

Arguably, the initial military incursions into Afghanistan and Iraq were textbook examples of American tactical and strategic prowess. The high intensity conflict phases of both operations concluded in under 120 days each (Reese and Wright 2008; Kelly Bensahel, and Olikier 2011). What challenged American and Coalition leadership was the

multifaceted nature of nation-building while promoting an ideology of democratic governance, which possessed difficulties in translation across socio-cultural boundaries. The dissonance manifested itself in the rise of the modern insurgency, which evolved throughout time and space to confront, what the belligerents believed to be, the existential threat of the Western incursion. These grassroots organizations, rooted in social malcontent and politico-religious ideology evolved over time; growing into a transnational hybrid threat with a vaporous form, which spread like a disease among the disenfranchised (Kilcullen 2009). The American military evolved in-kind. In the years immediately following the onset of military operations, counter-insurgency based doctrine formed the nucleus of the United States' strategy to combat this elusive adversary. This doctrine brought relatively new terms to American forces at the tactical level including cultural awareness, capacity building, and partnered forces. U.S. Army training began incorporating the elements of the key leader engagement and dynamics of host nation partnership into junior leader training. Along with progressive American doctrine, this constituted an indicator of a polar shift in the assumptions concerning the nature of the conflict prior to the onset of hostilities. As early as 2006, the U.S. *Quadrennial Defense Review* stated "Future warriors will understand foreign cultures and societies and possess the ability to train, mentor and advise foreign security forces." Despite this beginning shift in priority, a degree of resistance existed within leadership circles, as some believed the new premises were more suited to Special Operations Forces (SOF) than to the conventional force (Kelly, Bensahel, and Olikier 2011). Throughout the occupation phases in Iraq until 2011, and in Afghanistan to present day,

this attitude remains largely prevalent, despite the fact conventional forces continue to shoulder a significant preponderance of building capacity in partnered nation (PN) forces.

The advent of doctrine, formalizing the structure of regionally aligned advisor brigades denotes that U.S. Army's Conventional Forces (CF) are working to remedy one of the most significant lessons learned from early Security Force Assistance (SFA) efforts. Namely, that without institutionalizing SFA advisory capabilities across Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and formalizing the mechanism through which advisory experience is codified and tracked (Russell 2014); valuable continuity is lost and achieving unity of effort is next to impossible. Regardless of this improvement, SOF are still popularly considered "the gold standard" to train and build capacity in indigenous units due to their training, experience, and organizational capabilities (Livingston 2011a). In high intensity conflict scenarios, SOF and CF have demonstrated significant progress through interaction and seeking mutually beneficial outcomes as a cohesive team (Fenzel and Lock 2015). This same cohesive teamwork, well documented throughout Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, does not reflect the same in topical discussions of advisory roles, functions, doctrine, and experience. In fact, precious little discussion exists on the topic of SOF and CF teamwork in a combined advisory role, most of which appears only as a passing side note in U.S. Army advisory doctrine. One of SOF's greatest limitations is their capacity, or lack of personnel, to address the growing requirement for U.S. advisors throughout the world. CF possess that capacity, while lacking the specialized training and advisory experiences that renders SOF the proponent of choice for such missions. The ramifications of this dynamic, coupled with the lack of topical conversation surrounding

this subject, should appear self-evident to the military professional. If SOF possess the capability, while CF possess the capacity; why should we not explore a bilateral approach to addressing many of the advisory challenges throughout the Geographic Combatant Commands? The purpose of this research seeks to address this issue, opening a door for further conversation on the next steps for SOF and CF integration, interoperability, and interdependence (I3).

### Primary Research Question

In conjunction with the purpose of the research, the primary research question will further address the benefits and aspects of successful SOF and CF I3. Specifically, this research will answer the focused question of “when and where should SOF and CF integrate to improve the successful execution of a SFA program or operation?” To address this question, the research will highlight the relevancy of SFA in today’s strategic environment and ascertain what socio-cultural components of both advisor and host nation contribute to that successful outcome. While perhaps simple in context, the implications given the complexity of today’s operational environment, especially given the hybrid nature of many threats endangering the stability of fragile states throughout the world, cannot be overstated. Challenges abound to the concept of SOF and CF I3 in SFA which include organizational culture, bureaucratic ambiguity, and internal resistance. Further discussion of these challenges will provide additional context in chapter 4, “Data Presentation and Analysis.” The research will integrate all findings into a proposed, exploratory approach method, as official doctrine offers no integrative solution for SFA, which blends SOF capability with CF capacity. The proposed hypothesis for

consideration includes the following conditions for “when and where” SOF and CF should integrate to ensure the success of an SFA program:

1. Where the environment is not well defined or understood.
2. Where a hybrid threat exists.
3. When SOF’s lack of capacity outpaces their capabilities.
4. When CFs possess the capacity, but lack the capability.

### Secondary Research Questions

The secondary research questions set the guiding framework to recommend an exploratory approach method, which answers the main question and validates the hypothesis of “when and where should SOF and CF integrate to improve the successful execution of a SFA program or operation?” Following a logical progression to achieve a viable solution, these questions provide a referential frame as to the relevancy, guiding policy, and value that SFA contributes towards achieving United States Government (USG) objectives and contributing to our national security. The questions under consideration in this research are as follows:

1. Does SFA prevent conflicts?
2. Are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?
3. Are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?
4. What socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisory elements contribute to the success or detriment of an SFA effort?

5. What social theories provide value towards developing an exploratory operational approach in a complex SFA environment?

These secondary research questions concentrically approach the main research question and hypothesis through examining current doctrine, independently commissioned and relevant studies, as well as historical anecdotal evidence and testimony as to “what does or does not” work in foreign advisory situations. Cross-referencing the evidence for trends and comparative analysis will provide a foundation for a conclusion and recommendation for this research.

The first question provides perspective as to the relevancy of SFA to achieving USG objectives in complex environments. Especially given the background in the research material concerning a fair amount of atmospheric dissonance as to “why bother” with SFA, the conclusion to this question will demonstrate whether or not advisory efforts have a positive (or negative) impact on a state’s fragility and therefore the risk of overt conflict requiring a significant U.S. or coalition intervention.

The second and third questions address the subcomponents of environmental factors that impact SFA, and further encompass the concept that if SFA mitigates the risk of conflict, where and when does SFA do the most good and what conditions contribute to either a successful or unsuccessful endstate? These questions mainly analyze the PN and Partner Force (PF) aspects that affect SFA efforts either negatively or positively. Qualitatively analyzing the conditions and atmospheric factors to compare shared trends will provide a foundation as to what environments will afford the greatest chances for SFA to succeed in mitigating conflict. Furthermore, the evidence presented through these



questions will set the groundwork to address the main purpose of the research through recommending “where” SOF and CF should integrate in SFA endeavors.

Related to the previous two questions, the fourth question examines the socio-cultural factors and inputs of U.S. advisors that can potentially impact the outcome of SFA. This encompasses both desired aspects of the advisor interacting in a foreign environment as well as how advisory elements interact with each other. Specifically addressing factors of SOF/CF I3, this question addresses the “when” of SOF/CF partnership in a persistent advisory scenario.

The final question addresses a supplementary issue of theoretical exploration in strategy. Social theory emerges as a potentially relevant perspective, through which both SOF and conventional planners can view the scope of a problem and apply the tenants of operational design to develop a feasible operational approach. Especially in circumstances where lethal operations are not an option, or the adversarial relationship is not defined or irrelevant, social theory provides a mechanism to categorize and define complex systems issues within a society that certain Department of Defense (DoD) programs, including SFA, were ultimately designed to address.

### Definitions, Terms, and Concepts

Several definitions, terms, and concepts require explanation to further contextualize the research. This research concerns SFA, which in comparison to similar DoD programs, is frequently confused or misunderstood, in part due to the vague description of related terminology within both Joint and Army doctrine. The definitions of the interrelated DoD programs and SFA consist of the following.

Foreign Internal Defense: Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014).

Security Assistance: The group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 or other related statutes by which the U.S. provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2011a).

Security Cooperation (SC): All DoD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and partner nation military and security capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to allied and partner nations (Department of Defense 2016).

Security Force Assistance (SFA): The unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority. SFA improves the capability and capacity of host-nation or regional security organization's security forces (Department of the Army 2009).

The interrelation of the terminology has caused confusion, even among the higher strategic policy formulation circles within the DoD (Russell 2014). What is the difference between SFA and Security Cooperation (SC)? Is Foreign Internal Defense a subset of SFA? Rather, much like the concept of unified action; SFA, SC, Security Assistance, and Foreign Internal Defense are all complementary but have separate lines of authority and

funding, which delineate their respective activities, but sometimes blur the lines as well. DoDI 5000.68, the cornerstone document outlining the duties and responsibilities of all DoD agencies in pursuance of SFA, provides the context which codifies these relationships.

Security Force Assistance is a subset of DoD overall SC initiatives. Other SC activities, such as bilateral meetings or civil affairs activities dedicated to the non-security sector, provide valuable engagement opportunities between the United States and its partners, but fall outside the scope of SFA.

Furthermore, the document entails that “SFA activities must directly increase the capacity or capability of a foreign security force or their supporting institutions.” By correlation, some activities that fall under the categorizations of Foreign Internal Defense and Security Assistance can also be considered SFA activities; if those activities are specifically focused on building the capacity and capability of a foreign PF. Figure 1 displays the doctrinal depiction of the relationship between all four concepts.

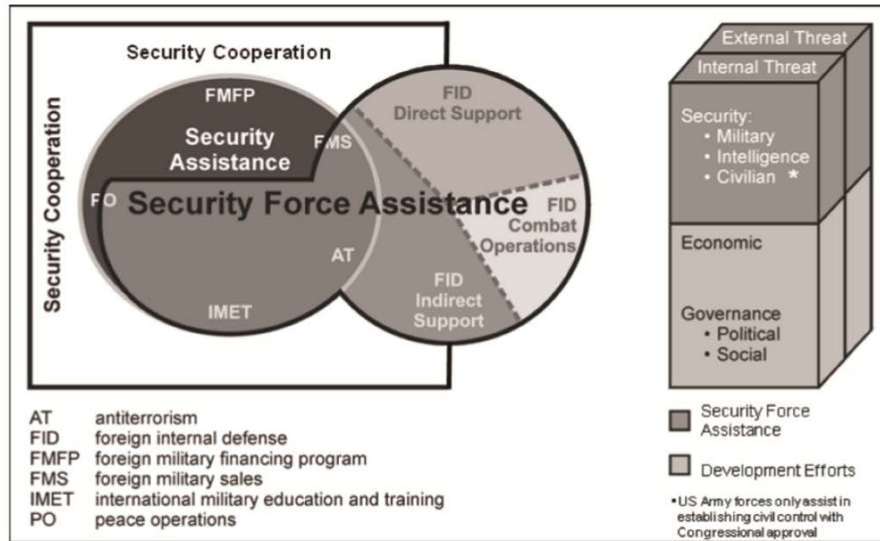


Figure 1. Relationship of Security Force Assistance with Security Cooperation, Security Assistance, and Foreign Internal Defense

Source: Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 1-7.

For these purposes, SFA is best visualized as a spectrum of DoD activities, specifically designed to build capacity and capability in a PF, falling under the umbrella concept of SC, which encompasses aspects of foreign internal defense and security assistance. As depicted above, SFA contains the majority of activities under SC, but not all.

Finally, the terminology of integration, interoperability, interdependence provides a foundation for presentation of the analysis concerning how SOF and CF should partner in the conduct of SFA. As described in *The Leader's Guide to SOF/CF I3*, the following definitions are afforded:

Integration: The arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole. CF, SOF, and partner integration is the purposeful

and synchronized arrangement of capabilities, authorities, and actions in support of national and theater-strategic objectives.

Interdependence: The purposeful reliance of military forces and other partners on each other's capabilities, authorities, and actions to maximize the complementary and reinforcing effects of both.

Interoperability: The ability to operate in synergy in the execution of assigned tasks. Interoperability is the ability of unified action partners (UAPs), including SOF, CF, and other stakeholders to exchange information, services, or actions to facilitate executing assigned tasks

The interrelation of all three terms denotes the criticality of UAPs leveraging the benefits of each other's capabilities (interdependence), having systems and procedures that correlate with each other as a whole (interoperability), and aligning each UAP's activities and goals to achieve an endstate. Of note, the concept of I3 does not necessarily entail proximity or unity of command, although aspects of these notions certainly could not harm the intent of the overall I3 concept, which is succinctly described as teamwork and grounded in the conception of positive working relationships. This thesis will use the concept of I3 to describe the conditions, benefits, and relational aspects that afford SOF and CF a means to integrate in the conduct of SFA.

### Assumptions

The findings in this research are framed within a series of rational and valid assumptions which follow a logical pathway towards the conclusion of this study, "when and where should SOF and CF integrate to improve the successful execution of a SFA program or operation?" These assumptions encompass a variety of environmental factors

and further frame the nature and purpose of SFA as a mechanism to achieve USG policy objectives and improve our national security.

The first assumption is, generally, that failed or failing states are a threat to the security of the United States. This assumption, grounded in trends and potentials of the modern geopolitical environment, views that states without functioning institutions of governance or a capable security mechanism, will potentially devolve into safe havens for transnational organizations or groups that threaten the interests and security of the U.S. This assumption is codified both in U.S. policy documentation including the 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, joint doctrine, and scholarly articles. Significantly, the *National Security Strategy* of 2010 stated “diplomacy and development capabilities must strengthen weak and failing states that breed conflict and endanger regional and global security.” Furthermore underscoring the importance that “our military will continue strengthening its capacity to partner with foreign counterparts, train and assist security forces, and pursue military to military ties with a broad range of governments.” The importance of this assumption to this research provides the framework as to the “why bother” with conducting SFA, and denotes the importance for SOF and CF to develop an integrated approach in its execution.

The second assumption is that SFA, as a comprehensive DoD initiative, is preventative in nature. This assumption provides further context to the research as to the design and purpose of SFA, to mitigate the risks of regional instability due to failing or failed states, and that SFA programs are specifically constructed to address issues prior to a crisis event requiring a substantial USG intervention. This assumption ensconces the duality that DoD actions under an SFA construct “will lead to stronger host-state

institutions and make countries less fragile” (McNerney et al. 2014). This assumption is also grounded in U.S. policy, military doctrine, and scholarly articles. Furthermore, assuming the preventative nature of SFA delineates it from other DoD activities, which suggest asymmetric solutions are required to address the complex issues of an SFA environment.

Third, the assumption that SFA is a spectrum of activities as opposed to a prescriptive and linear DoD program addresses the multifaceted environment in which DoD entities conducting SFA will experience. Implicit in joint doctrine and U.S. policy, DoD UAPs will conduct SFA in a variety of multinational environments, each requiring a unique and tailored approach to address the issues unique to that particular circumstance. As such, the successful conduct of SFA will require a variety of capabilities and authorities to reach an endstate. The relevancy of this assumption frames the importance of SOF and CF I3, as form follows function, so must UAPs work in syncopation and co-opt each other’s unique capabilities and strengths to achieve success.

Finally, the assumption that “SOF cannot do it alone” denotes the importance that capability is not enough to address the plethora of geopolitical issues requiring USG assistance. In a posture statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Admiral Eric Olson (former Special Operations Command Commander) emphasized the limitations of the mission due to limited numbers and a high operational tempo within SOF, despite recent growth in the overall personnel (Livingston 2011a). Furthermore, this assumption frames the circumstances surrounding the newly minted conventional regionally aligned forces and SFA brigade combat teams (BCTs); denoting the importance that policy makers have emphasized concerning the augmentation of SFA, which has traditionally

been a SOF mission, with unilateral CF capacity. Additionally, a critical gap that this assumption highlights is that capacity can compensate for capability. While arguably, in case studies and doctrinal guidelines, SFA requires a quality over quantity approach. Interestingly enough, the validity of this assumption has not led to a discussion for a SOF and CF integrated approach in the conduct of SFA, which is the main purpose of this exploratory research.

### Limitations

Several limitations require clarification prior to discussing the focus and scope of this research. First and foremost, the researcher found no literature, research, or discussion concerning the integration of SOF and CF in the conduct of SFA. Plenty of literature and documentation discusses the role of SOF and CF I3 in high intensity conflict and kinetic environments. However, a prominent trend in literature and doctrine delineates that the preponderance of SFA activities fall primarily within the realm of special operations. History, case studies, and trends of military policy, including the formation of regionally aligned forces and SFA BCTs, denote that CF have a significant co-responsibility to participate in the SFA spectrum. Regardless, the lack of applicable subject matter in this context renders the nature of this research as exploratory in nature.

Second, concerning the secondary research questions including “does SFA prevent conflicts?”; “are there prevalent environmental conditions in a state that are required to ensure the success of SFA?”; and “are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?”; the very nature of the complex geopolitical environments in which SFA is conducted renders quantitative analysis of the subject matter difficult. As such, the factors surrounding intangible variables as manifested in



social phenomena are subject to conjecture and critique due to their ambiguous nature. Nevertheless, qualitative analysis examining the trends and potentials surrounding environmental factors in an SFA scenario allows the research to progress to a logical conclusion.

Finally, this study draws from U.S. military doctrine, case studies, independently commissioned investigations, and academic publications. As such, all subject matter remains vulnerable to the independently held biases of each originator, to include the viewpoints based off the operational experience of this researcher. No field study was conducted in this investigation due to the time available, and all research concluded on March 23, 2017 to allow sufficient time for analysis and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

### Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this research is broadly framed by the three levels of war (tactical, operational, and strategic), while the delimitations provide additional focus to keep the conclusions specific and relevant. The research in this thesis is exploratory in nature and seeks to address a gap in doctrine and policy concerning the lack of discussion for a SOF and CF integrated approach to conduct SFA. The targeted audience extends beyond the SOF community to interested parties in the greater U.S. Military and stakeholders in policy formulation. For the purposes of this research, the boundaries of this study will concentrate on addressing recommendations for the execution of SOF and CF integration at the tactical advisory levels of SFA; specifically delimited to focus on a recommendation for SOF and CF integration at unit levels including brigade and below. A broader discussion is required for examining the potential for SOF and CF integration

at the operational levels. While aspects of tactical SFA will arguably transcend into the operational context, the researcher concluded that such discussion best befits a separate study. As such, this research is focused on the tactical execution of SFA, and how the successful administration of a blended SOF and CF approach is a viable option for implementation. Furthermore, this study will specifically address U.S. Army SOF, which contains a broad mixture of units and capabilities including Special Forces (SF), Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and Special Operations Aviation. A final delimitation of this study will focus on the direct contact effects and efforts of U.S. advisors to Foreign Security Forces (FSF), without examining how the complementary effects of other SOF capabilities, including civil infrastructure development and information operations, contribute to an overall SFA effort. While comprising crucial aspects of a holistic theater SC program, these supplementary enablers to capacity building programs were not considered in this research as they arguably merit their own study and discussion.

### Conclusion

The review of the literature, contained in the following chapter, will address the academic and doctrinal backgrounds to answer the following secondary research questions:

1. Does SFA prevent conflicts?
2. Are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?
3. Are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?

4. What socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisory elements contribute to the success or detriment of an SFA effort?
5. What social theories provide value towards developing an exploratory operational approach in a complex SFA environment?

The review of the literature in the following chapter is separated into three components of policy and doctrine, independently commissioned research, and other testimonial resources including peer reviewed opinion articles, case studies, journal editorials, and lessons learned documentation. Forthcoming analysis of the conclusions based off the trends presented in the literature will suit to address the primary research question, when and where SOF and CF should integrate to ensure the success of an SFA program.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Overview

The global trends that will define the future security environment are characterized by a rapid rate of change and a complexity born of the multiple ways in which they intersect and influence one another. . . . The United States' sustained attention and engagement will be important in shaping emerging global trends, both positive and negative.

— *Quadrennial Defense Review* 2014

The purpose of this research is to explore the potential and value for a SOF and CF bilateral approach in the conduct of SFA. The intent of this study is to open a door for further conversation on the next steps for SOF and CF I3. The literature review demonstrates there is potential in that regards, however challenges to this concept still exist. For purposes of this study, the existing literature on the subject matter is organized into U.S. policy and military doctrine, independently commissioned research, and other testimonial resources including peer reviewed opinion articles, case studies, journal editorials, and lessons learned documentation. A review of each of these subsets of research will address the secondary research questions, set the framework for an analysis of trends and potentials, and provide context for the research findings in chapter 4 (Data Analysis and Findings). This, in turn will lead to the conclusion and recommendations in the final chapter of this study, and ultimately answer the primary research question when and where SOF and CF should integrate to ensure the success of an SFA program.

## Policy and Doctrine

A review of the U.S. military doctrinal literature on the subject matter reveals several trends, assumptions, and guidelines for the conduct of SFA, which partially answers some of the secondary research questions. By its nature, doctrine is proscriptive, as opposed to prescriptive in context, and serves to provide members of the U.S. Military a set of guidelines in which to operate. From the Army's perspective, SFA is nested within the doctrinal framework of the operating concept "unified land operations," which "recognizes the three-dimensional nature of modern warfare and the need to conduct a fluid mix of offensive, defensive, and stability operations or defense support of civil authorities simultaneously" (Department of the Army 2011). Concerning doctrine and the main research question, much emphasis is placed on the role of the BCT in SFA as outlined in Field Manual (FM) 3.07.1, which is the Army's capstone publication on SFA. Of note, this publication has not been updated since May 2009. Likewise, ADRP 3-05, the Army's doctrinal reference for special operations, discusses Army Special Forces and other SOF roles pertaining to SFA related activities. Neither document discusses an integrative SOF and CF approach to SFA; however, FM 3.07.1 provides a brief reference as to the relevancy of this possible option:

Rarely will U.S. forces conducting SFA be homogenous in terms of conventional or special operations forces, but rather contain both. Recent operational experience has shown that, in improving the effectiveness of FSF, the supported commander conducting SFA may be either a conventional force or special operations force commander. . . . If U.S. forces are to train a large number of FSF in a short time, then the requirement may exceed the capacity of available special operations forces. Planners at these levels determine the number of conventional and special operations forces as part of their mission analysis aimed at training enough FSF in the given time frame. (Department of the Army 2009, 1-9)

Doctrine concerning the roles of SOF and CF continue to delineate the premise that both elements will conduct SFA separately, yet coordinating their activities throughout to promote unity of effort. While the concept concerning this form of teamwork demonstrates that both SOF and CF should conduct SFA, it does not address the premise of an integrative approach.

Concerning the secondary research question, “does SFA prevent conflicts?”, doctrinal references allude to the preventative nature of SFA, but does not provide any concrete evidence to prove as such. DoDI 5000.68, the overarching DoD policy document, outlines each joint service component’s roles, responsibilities, and the intent of SFA, which is grounded in this preventative assumption:

SFA shall encompass DoD efforts to support the professionalization and the sustainable development of the capacity and capability of the foreign security forces and supporting institutions of host countries, as well as international and regional security organizations. SFA can occur across the range of military operations and spectrum of conflict as well as during all phases of military operations . . . SFA activities shall be conducted primarily to assist host countries to defend against internal and transnational threats to stability. However, the Department of Defense may also conduct SFA to assist host countries to defend effectively against external threats. (Department of Defense 2010, 2)

The very nature of the statement “conducted primarily to assist host countries to defend against internal and transnational threats to stability” frames the context of SFA’s preventative nature, albeit in an assumptive, as opposed to evidential format. Doctrine continues to describe the preventative nature of SFA through its illustration on SFA within the spectrum of conflict.

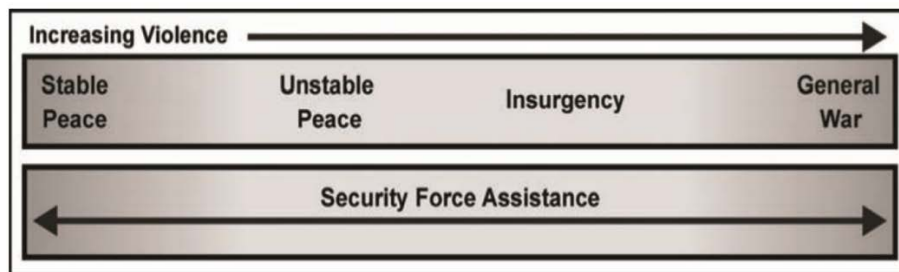


Figure 2. Security Force Assistance Within the Spectrum of Conflict

*Source:* Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 1-1.

This concept, rooted in doctrine, that SFA occurs “from stable peace to general war” further delineates how SFA is a spectrum of activities. Joint doctrine outlines how the majority of SC efforts, of which SFA is a subcategory of activities, generally occurs during phase 0 (shape) and phase 1 (deter). The intent of SC within these phases is to “dissuade or deter adversaries and assure friends” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2011a, V-8). These activities are reasonably assumed to be preventative as opposed to “interventive” or reactionary in nature. In conclusion, both policy and doctrine assume that SFA and related activities prevent conflict, but neither discuss the metrics for how crisis mitigation is successful. This finding validates a critical assumption of this research, but does not provide proof concerning “does SFA prevent conflicts?”

For the next secondary questions of, “are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?” and “are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?”, doctrine does not overtly describe such conditions. However, deductively, it is reasonable to assume, due to SFA’s purpose “to build capability and capacity within FSFs and their

supporting institutions” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, III-2), that a partner force and a supporting institution must exist prior to the execution of a program. Doctrinally, if that is the minimal condition required to conduct SFA, then the mere existence of a partner force and a supporting institution is enough to, theoretically, conduct a successful program. The state and condition of said PF and supporting institution is not addressed as a critical factor within doctrine. Neither is the condition of the partnered nation to include governance, culture, and complexity of the social context. Doctrinally, U.S. advisors are expected to plan for success without much “partnerable clay” to work with; instead, the onus is placed on planners to determine what environmental factors are important, and which ones are not. “Planners assess whether they will be constructing a FSF from the ground up, reconstructing a FSF, based on existing capabilities and structure, or merely reinforcing an existing security force” (Department of the Army 2009, 2-11). Doctrine, however, does address the importance of knowing the current state of affairs in a SFA environment, without defining certain key factors that could include fragility of the state (government), co-variance of culture (how similar—dissimilar are advisors and PF?), and operational risk (is there an ongoing internal conflict?). In conclusion, doctrine partially answers the secondary research questions of “are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?” and “are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?”, without an in-depth discussion on what conditions have historically led to success or failure. Most importantly, a doctrinal gap exists in the discussion for planning considerations in challenging SFA environments.



The secondary research question of “what socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisory elements contribute to the success of an SFA effort?” is sufficiently addressed in doctrine. However, while lists of desired qualities are beneficial for application, they do not quantify “how” such aspects contribute to successful SFA programs. Regardless, even this aspect contributes to the research through emphasizing the qualitative nature of the findings and their value to the military professional. ADRP 3-05 contains an extensive list of desired advisor qualities, while FM 3-1.07 incorporates the 12 ARSOF imperatives which were designed to guide SOF advisors in the conduct of SFA (Department of the Army 2009, A-1). Furthermore, FM 3-1.07 incorporated many of these imperatives in a chapter dedicated to facilitating advisor understanding within the multinational context. “Working with Counterparts” included aspects of establishing rapport with partners and its benefits, considerations thereof to include “role shock,” ambiguity, and relationships. While perhaps not overly comprehensive in nature, this advent in doctrine, at a minimum, describes some of the desired socio-cultural advisor qualities that are assumptively acknowledged as important in SFA and related activities.

To conclude the review of both policy and doctrinal literature, as a general trend, both resources focused on intangible aspects of the subject matter, which can be logically aligned with the findings in other research sources to reach a conclusion in the final chapter of this research. Reviewing the doctrine and policy behind SFA did not provide concrete conclusions leading to developing an answer to the hypothesis of this research. Of note, MTTP 6-05, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces Integration and Interoperability*, only discussed SOF and CF integration roles in a traditional high intensity conflict scenario. This lends further

credence to the aspect that a discussion should occur concerning SOF and CF I3 in irregular environments such as SFA. However, doctrine is inextricably linked to policy, and the logic in policy must stem from some other source. Given the nature of the independently commissioned research resources in the following paragraph, further conclusions linking the relationship of all reviewed literature to the subject matter will follow.

#### Independently Commissioned Research

The independently commissioned research literature mainly sources from U.S. government funded initiatives concerning several of the secondary research questions of this study. Mainly consisting of reports from non-profit institutions and congressional research or government accountability services, the intent of these various research projects is to inform policy and decision-making at the national policy level. The literature discusses the ramifications and aspects of successful SC and SFA at the regional levels. Subsequent reports concerning the success or failure of SFA programs in individual countries were not considered in this study, due to the general nature of the secondary research questions and the overall intent of the research, which is to explore the potential and value for a SOF and CF bilateral approach in the conduct of SFA. Comparable to the review of doctrinal literature, the independently commissioned research sources likewise delineate a separation of SOF and CF in SFA programs, without discussing the feasibility or relevancy of an integrative approach.

The independent research sources directly answer many of the secondary research questions. Arguably, the most academically difficult question to measure and address, “does SFA prevent conflicts,” is partially answered and corroborated through a couple

different studies. Additionally, all literature sources hypothesized the dangerous nature of failed or failing states to U.S. security interests, the most prominent report's viewpoint is reflected in figure 3.

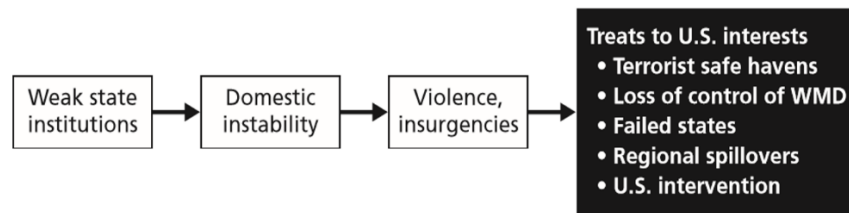


Figure 3. Hypothetical Causal Chain: Problem Identification

*Source:* Michael J. McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 18.

The same report cross referenced several analytics to determine what contributes to a given nation's state fragility index, or the risk that a given state will require a U.S. intervention to preserve the standing government. This index is calculated and measured given several factors including governmental mechanisms, corruption, and the conditions of pre-existing conflict. When the state fragility index was correlated to a series of nations, in which the U.S. had certain capacity building SC programs (which is SFA), the index score generally reduced when compared to similar conditions and factors in other nations without similar programs. The bottom line assessment was that "training and education efforts can help reduce fragility and prevent conflict" (McNerney et al. 2014). This partially answered the secondary research question of "does SFA prevent conflicts?", while pointing to several environmental factors which either raise or lower a

state's fragility index. Another critical discussion in the literature centered around the notion of whether a given state can ever be "too far gone" to benefit from SC or SFA initiatives. In this regard, one study stated:

At a more general level, our findings suggest that, in situations of high fragility, SC is not sufficient to stave off instability because highly fragile partner states may not be able to use SC effectively. This point highlights the importance of prevention (e.g., preventing states from descending to a level of fragility from which it is difficult to recover) . . . our findings suggest that there is a need for managing expectations of the effect of SC in highly fragile states. (McNerney et al. 2014, 94)

Concerning the secondary research questions of "are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?" and "are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?", the independent research literature correlates several critical factors for this study. The first context includes the concept that several factors do exist that contribute to the success of SFA. As detailed in the literature, several prominent factors include PN and PF matching; when U.S. political objectives align with the host government and the PF has a standard baseline of capabilities, partnership efforts are more likely to succeed (Paul et al. 2013). Features of the PN government are also discussed; factors including "more democratic governments" (McNerney et al. 2014), "strong economies" (Paul et al. 2013), and "PN invests own funds to sustain" (Paul et al. 2015) demonstrated strong indicators for successful capacity building initiatives. Retrospectively, various challenges to successful SC or SFA initiatives ranged from "catastrophic" to "disruptive. The literature discussed that "non-sustainable programs," such as infrequent or limited duration engagements, are considered disruptors. Likewise, an "unwillingness to compromise over developing shared interests," or incongruent objectives between the Host Nation and the U.S.,

rendered a capacity building program infeasible (Paul et al. 2015). The bottom line for research literature in this category concludes that “partnering is easier for units of some types than for others, and its effectiveness will vary accordingly” (Kelly, Bensahel, and Olikier 2011, 80). General trends for similarities in the literature concerning, universally, what environmental factors contribute to a program’s success or failure are difficult to ascertain. One significant general theme is that successful capacity building is almost infeasible if conflict is present in a country. One such study posited:

During a conflict, these challenges (of capacity building) are magnified. Not only must existing police, justice, and corrections personnel be retrained and their approaches rethought on the job, but armies must be expanded (or created) and military personnel trained even as they fight. This makes assessments against well-defined global standards unrealistic, for their will be neither the luxury of long-term training to build the best possible force nor the time or circumstances to conduct assessments in a rigorous manner. (Kelly, Bensahel, and Olikier 2011, 91)

Challenges to assessing program effectiveness and the environmental factors therein abound throughout all literary considerations. One study indicated that “the broader realms of U.S. security cooperation . . . confound our ability to assign causality as do various exogenous factors, such as international politics, global public diplomacy, and partner nations themselves” (Moroney et al. 2011, 8). The SFA environment can be overly complex as to determine metrics of success, while failure can be overly self-evident. Regardless, the main argument of this research is that trends and potentials can be analyzed across research to develop a tangible conclusion for the main and secondary research questions.

The secondary research question of “what socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisory elements contribute to the success of an SFA effort?” was not sufficiently addressed in the independent research. If any reference was made, the literature addressed generalized

concepts including “cultural awareness,” “mental agility,” and “comfortable with ambiguity” as desirable traits of U.S. advisors. This is largely due to the fact that intangible human personality traits are difficult to measure as supportive to the success of SFA programs or not; much depends upon common sense. Despite this concept, one study reported on the criticality of tracking advisor experience within the armed forces as a crucial factor in contributing to the execution and sustainment of future SFA programs. Within the report, researchers observed, specifically within the Army, that no skill identifiers existed to codify and capture advisor experience and very little formalized training mechanisms existed within the conventional force to prepare advisors for an SFA mission (Russell 2014). Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of capturing advisor experience as such:

Without goals and milestones, it is unclear how long the Army’s implementation of the DODI 5000.68 requirement to identify and track personnel with SFA-related experience might take. As a result, the Army is at risk for not being able to readily identify the right personnel with the right SFA-related skills and experience to serve in a SFA mission. This could potentially limit the effectiveness of the advisor teams and the Army’s ability to develop, maintain, and institutionalize the capabilities of service-members to conduct SFA activities to build the capacity and capability of foreign military forces. (Russell 2014, 12)

The remaining aspects of the literature did not further address desirable socio-cultural advisor qualities. However, statements including the aforementioned indicate that, even within academic projects, intangible factors can sometimes play the most important role in research. Arguably, this is all the more important given the intangible factors surrounding what does or does not contribute to successful capacity building programs in foreign countries.

In conclusion, the general strengths of the independently commissioned research literature balanced out the weaknesses of the aforementioned doctrinal literature; and vice

versa. The reports in this portion of the research provided adequate context for determining the effective, preventative nature of SFA and the environmental factors that contribute to or disrupt the successful execution thereof. Furthermore, the literature discussed some of the critical challenges in assessing the success of capacity building programs, and the distinct, intangible nature behind the human factors that are desired in both advisors and partners to achieve a positive endstate. Forthcoming examination in chapter four (Data Presentation and Analysis) will detail the importance of correlated trends in the literature as to what environmental factors best suit the conduct of SFA.

#### Other Research Sources

The other sources of literature, considered within this study, consist of peer reviewed journal articles, case study testimonials, and military lessons learned documentation. The common theme contained within all these sources is that they consist of first-hand accounts and experiences within the subject matter, providing a “what actually works” dynamic to the SFA model in complement to doctrinal literature and academic studies. As with the other literature sources, a cross-study comparison of the trends and potentials discussed within this research material subset will provide additional context in addressing the secondary research questions towards formulating an informed response as to the primary research question of when and where SOF and CF should integrate to ensure the success of a SFA program.

Comparable to the doctrinal literature, the general trend among the other research sources fall short in addressing the metrics to answer the secondary research question “does SFA prevent conflicts?” Most accounts of both advisors and lessons learned documentation touch on the assumption concerning the preventative nature of SFA,

without discussing granular metrics for measures of performance and measures of effectiveness. A publication from the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, the DoD proponent for SFA related knowledge management and capacity building operational approach, discusses this preventative nature in one of their three SFA leader handbooks:

The ultimate aim and measure of effectiveness for SFA is the establishment of a self-sustaining, safe and secure environment maintained by the host nation (HN) security forces. Commanders should consider developing objectives that result in HN security forces that are:

1. Competent. Across all levels and functions.
2. Capable. Appropriately sized and effective enough to accomplish missions, sustainable, and resourced within HN capabilities.
3. Committed. To the security and survival of the state, preservation of the liberties and human rights of the citizens and peaceful transition to power.
4. Confident. The FSF secure the country, the citizens trust their security forces will provide security and be professional, HN government confident they have the correct security forces, and the international community believes the security forces are forces for good. (JCISFA 2008, 19)

In short, the recommended operational approach should include partnering activities that address the preventative nature in SFA, allowing for a PN's safe and stable socio-political environment. A first-hand account from an advisor's perspective in Iraq also portrays the assumptive nature of SFA's purpose to prevent conflicts, with some caveats as to the challenges within:

SFA is not the panacea for fourth generation warfare. Rather, SFA is a proven method for maintaining our national security interests with a small, low profile footprint. . . . In this era of persistent conflict, pundits and military analysts have suggested that through a robust training program, we can functionally make U.S. combat troops unnecessary in our current warzones. However, when you put that plan from paper into action, there are some significant challenges that leaders and planners take into account. (Potter 2006, 74)



Other similar testimonials echo the same sentiments as to the preventative nature of SFA, without discussing tangible metrics concerning how that is proven. This mirrors much of the same dialogue within the doctrinal literature. As a military culture, we possess a shared mentality that SFA programs prevent conflict, make countries safer, and thereby promote regional stability in support of our national security interests; we are just not sure “how” that is. Regardless, the atmospheric of assumption plays an important role in this research, especially when coupled with findings in the independently commissioned research literature and framed with the other secondary research questions.

Subsequently, this literature subset confirms several aspects concerning the secondary research questions of “are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?” and “are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?”, especially in regard to the independently commissioned research literature. First-hand advisor experience, from an Iraqi SFA perspective, argues three critical conditions exist to promote successful SFA:

1. The key (leadership) FSF personalities accept incremental responsibility for the security in the area and are willing to work with the advisors and partner units to enhance their professionalism.
2. The FSF are capable of operating (independently) by providing local area security in limited capacity of company-level and below for an extended period.
3. The people will support a professional indigenous security force (military, paramilitary, or police) with some western influence to be responsible for their security. (Potter 2006, 73-74)

The same advisor testimonial mirrors a critical challenge to successful SFA, as discussed in the independently commissioned research material, concerning the environmental aspects of the greater geopolitical environment, stating “it’s tough to champion the primacy of indigenous security forces when the premise of central

government authority is not accepted” (Potter 2006, 75). This statement addresses the presumption that there are environmental factors, outside of U.S. advisors’ control, which heavily impact the success or failure of capacity building efforts that vary from region to region. A central theme in this study is to ascertain which of those aspects are most important in determining the “where and when” SOF and CF should partner in an integrated advisory model.

Concerning the desirable socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisors, the literature highlighted several key themes that play an important role in this research. First, the nature of SFA heavily considers a long-term outlook. Several literature articles discussed the importance of patience for successful SFA programs, as dividends on the advisory investment often take years to manifest. As indicated in a journal article discussing the limitations of SOF, patience played a critical role of capacity building efforts in Colombia as “U.S. and allied SOF began partnering with the Colombian SOF in the 1990s. It took more than a decade for this indirect approach to achieve strategic effects, ultimately helping bring the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) insurgency to the edge of defeat and subsequent peace negotiations” (Long 2016, 44). Multiple leadership handbooks concerning multinational operations and capacity building discuss the importance of cultural awareness and environmental understanding as critical in a SFA environment (Reese and Wright 2008; Potter 2011; Combined Armed Center 2016a; JCISFA 2008), as “failure to understand all aspects of partner forces degrades tempo, flexibility, and agility” (Combined Armed Center 2015, 9). As a core strength of SOF is cultural awareness both through training and experience, this premise provides additional grounds as to “where and when” SOF and CF should partner in SFA.

Specifically framed within an aspect of the hypothesis denoted in chapter 1 of this study, a strong indicator exists in the literature that this should occur “where the environment is not well understood”, deserving further correlation and analysis forthcoming in this study. Finally, this portion of the literature discussed “adaptability” as a desired advisory aspect. Highlighted in testimonials and lessons learned documentation, life as an advisor is incredibly complex, requires comfort in gray areas, ambiguous environments, and the ability to “clutch perform” in a wide spectrum of scenarios (JCISFA 2008; Potter 2011; Combined Armed Center 2016a). A common theme in the literature is that a variety of desirable socio-cultural traits for advisors exists, too many to list within this summary and review. The data presentation and analysis in chapter 4 will present a cross-referencing of commonly discussed traits, with given weight to importance, in support of answering the primary topic of this study.

### Summary and Conclusions

The review of the literature provides greater context and framing to the complex nature of SFA. As implicated throughout this chapter, the various conceptual delineations between doctrine, independently commissioned research, and the other sources demonstrate that each possess certain strengths and weaknesses in answering the secondary research questions. A review of the policy and doctrine provided context to the assumption that SFA is preventative in nature, without discussing metrics for how to measure its effectiveness. Environmental factors towards successful or unsuccessful SFA efforts, and desirable sociocultural aspects of U.S. advisors, highlighted the proscriptive nature of doctrine and policy; more importantly it has referential value to this research. Furthermore, the independently commissioned research provided metrics towards

assessing the success of SFA and providing measurable context that SFA does reduce state fragility in certain environments. According to the initial literature review, environmental factors such as form of governance, the existence of a pre-existing conflict, and co-variance of culture play a significant role to that end. Finally, the other research sources including testimonials, peer-reviewed journal articles, and military lessons learned documentation provided an “on the ground” perspective, linking doctrine with academic study to practice. The forthcoming chapter concerning the methodology of this study will further demonstrate how synthesis of the research literature will allow a logical finding and conclusion to the primary research question, which supports the premise for an integrated SOF and CF approach to SFA.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative comparison of the trends highlighted within the research is to explore and develop a picture of a hypothetical SFA environment, determine the conditions and aspects concerning whether a SFA program will or will not be successful, and to further identify where and when SOF and CF should partner to ensure a successful outcome thereof. To address the research findings in this chapter, the methodology of this study is organized into a summary of the research methods utilized, the developed evaluation criteria, and potential validity challenges or biases.

#### Research Methodology

The methodology utilized throughout the course of this study is qualitative in nature, which furthermore examined and measured the trends discovered concerning the secondary research questions within the three types of literature analyzed. Overall, the typology of qualitative research consisted of a summative evaluation, which is “the summing up of judgements about a program to make a major decision about its value, whether it should be continued, and whether the demonstrated model can or should be generalized to and replicated for other participants or in other places” (Patton 1980, 151). This was largely accomplished through viewing the subject matter hermeneutically, in order to determine the conditions under which advisory efforts take place, which will ascribe meaning to the conclusion (Patton 1980). Furthermore, the sampling for environmental conditions contributing to either successful or unsuccessful SFA

programs, and desired socio-cultural aspects of the advisor, were viewed through a theory-based, operational construct framework. This sampling methodology proved valuable given the exploratory nature of this research. Theory-based, operational construct sampling examines “incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs” (Patton 1980, 177). The theory basis is best described through the assumption that SFA, as a program, is preventative in nature. The operational construct aspect of the analysis sought to confirm or deny if SFA does prevent conflict; as well as describing what pre-existing environmental conditions affect the outcome of SFA either positively or negatively. Finally, the “real world” examples based off testimonies of SFA advisors in the literature completes the operational construct based sampling through providing context for “what does or does not work” in a SFA environment.

### Criteria Development

This methodology was applied in the research through developing four steps to answer the primary research question. A fifth step addresses recommendations for future research, based off the conclusion to the primary research question, and primarily addresses a theoretical construct for developing an inclusive operational approach to SFA that is framed through the lens of social theory. For purposes of this chapter, the four primary steps of the methodology are included below.

The first step in the research developmental model consisted of conducting a thorough review of the literature. The review is summarized in the preceding chapter 2 of this study. The primary purpose of the review was to examine gaps in the literature concerning the primary research question. Additionally, the review served to ascertain the

environmental factors that either contribute to an SFA program's success or failure, as well as draw conclusions as to what sociocultural aspects of SFA advisors will contribute to either end. The conclusion of the literature review revealed that very little discussion exists concerning a SOF and CF integrated approach to conduct SFA, confirming the validity of the primary question. Furthermore, reviewing U.S. policy and doctrine, independently commissioned research, and other sources, confirmed that cross referenceable environmental and advisory aspects exist for analysis. Finally, the review of the literature provided context that SFA can reduce a given state's fragility index, which affords the conclusion that SFA can prevent conflict. However, the degree of success in a SFA program must be viewed within the environmental context, which will be discussed in chapter 4, Data Presentation and Analysis.

The second step consists of categorizing the aspects of the SFA environment and U.S. advisors. Based off the literature review in the first step, the research material provided a variety of environmental conditions and advisor aspects, which require analysis in order to prescribe value. This value is primarily afforded based off the emphasis that the literature places on each related condition or aspect. Conditions and aspects were correlated according to both their frequency and "where," throughout the literature, they were addressed. The where consisted of what type of research material (i.e. doctrine, independent research, or other) that any particular aspect appeared therein, as indicated in an example table for the evaluation criteria in table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria for Environmental Conditions and Advisor Aspects

	Doctrine / Policy	Independent Research	Other Research/Testimonials	Emphasis Factor
Aspect "x"	x	x	x	3
Aspect "y"	x		x	2
Aspect "z"		x		1

*Source:* Created by author.

Separate tables for the individual aspects of positive environmental factors, negative environmental factors, as well as both positive and negative socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisors were utilized in this part of the research methodology to develop a holistic picture of what does or does not contribute to a successful SFA program. The type of research material was not weighted, so as not to assume any particular source was more valuable than another. Aspects throughout all the variable subsets were listed in priority from “significantly important” to “least important” on their respective tables. If a particular aspect appeared throughout all types of the research material, the aspect was weighted based off frequency of appearance in different research sources of the same subset. An aspect’s singular appearance in a given source counted towards the weighted total only once; subsequent appearances of the same aspect within the same source were not weighted or counted towards the total. The multifaceted nature of various geopolitical environments documented within the research literature, as well as the multiple desired traits in U.S. advisors, precipitated in this study selecting the top three aspects of each variable subset for consideration in the final data presentation and conclusion.

The third step of the research methodology consists of arraying the selected aspects and conditions on an environmental complexity model. Analyzing the model heuristically to determine the relationships between the selected aspects and their



function within a templated “zone of success” or “zone of failure” will further illustrate meaning for the conclusions drawn for secondary research questions 2, 3, and 4. Utilizing an environmental complexity model to view possible conclusions to the secondary research questions will additionally address several other trends and potentials concerning a SFA environment. Such trends and potentials will answer questions including “Are SFA environments that are likely to fail more complex in nature?” and “Is there a gap (gray zone) between success and failure in which a deciding factor must be determined?” Such observations, as depicted on an environmental complexity model, will serve to lay the foundation for reaching a conclusion to the primary research question of when and where should SOF and CF partner to facilitate a successful SFA program. Figure 4, depicted below, demonstrates the visual graphic used to depict the SFA environment as a spectrum of conditions and aspects between “success” and “failure.”

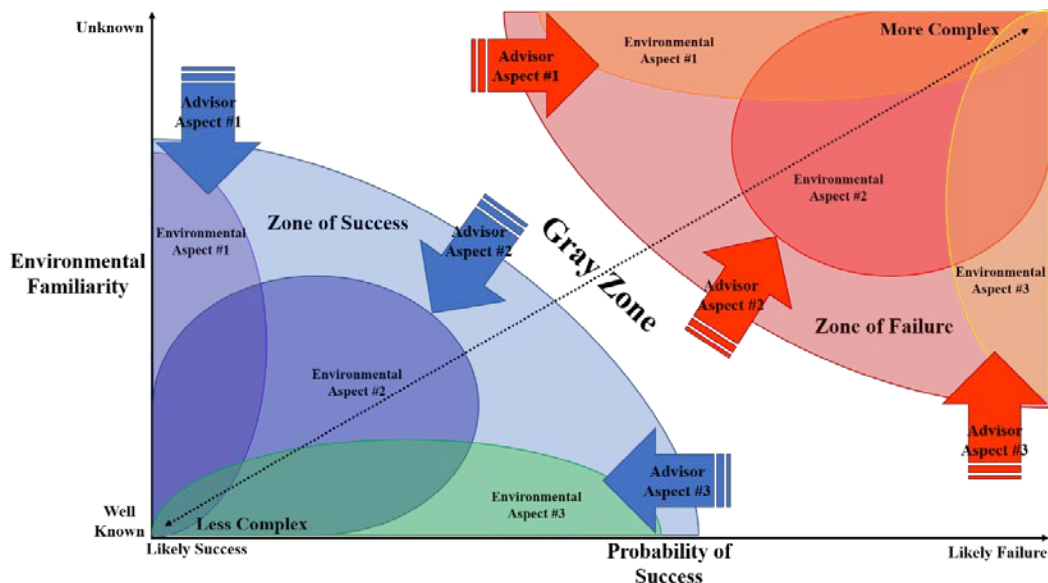


Figure 4. Example Environmental Complexity Model

Source: Created by author.

The fourth step of the research methodology consists of drawing conclusions after aggregating the findings and analyzing the data. After arraying the critical aspects and conditions on the environmental model, heuristically interpreting the data will provide the final context in which to confirm or deny the hypothesis of when and where SOF and CF should partner to facilitate a successful SFA program. The heuristic nature of analysis towards developing a methodical conclusion was chosen based off the exploratory nature of the research. The complexity of the subject matter and the substantial range of variables considered, notwithstanding their subjectivity due to the research material, makes quantitative analysis of the subject matter infeasible. Therefore, analyzing the subject matter to determine trends and potentials, visualized on an environmental complexity model, was chosen as the best possible research methodology to address the hypothesis and primary research question.

#### Challenges to Validity and Bias

Duly acknowledged, challenges to validity abound towards not only this research, but a significant amount of the source material considered in this study. Concerning the challenge to validity from external factors, authors from all sources document these challenges, most of which stem from the fact that much is unknown considering the relatively new topic of advisory programs. This includes whether or not such programs actually accomplish their intended purpose, and what are the intangible variables that contribute to either success or failure. A significant challenge consists of the fact that policy has not sufficiently defined “what SFA is,” as opposed to what “it is not.” One such study bemoaned the circumstance that even Army policy makers could not properly define the spectrum of SFA activities (Russell 2014). Logically, shortcomings in policy

will translate into doctrinal shortcomings. As U.S. military doctrine is the anchor to which many of the independent research sources tethered their initial assumptions, much of the external research validity comes into question. In order to mitigate this external validity challenge, the research methodology adopted a holistic literature and data analysis approach, which was then verified and adjusted through the input of academic counsel from experienced researchers. Through drawing from multiple literature sources across the subtypes of doctrine—policy, independently commissioned research, and other research sources including advisor testimonials and lessons learned literature, the research cross examined each included source against other subtypes to mitigate any peripheral validity issues. Additionally, the evaluation criteria and subsequent emphasis factors utilized in the latter portions of this research were developed independently from individual sources, and instead drew from all concerned literature subtypes to visualize each involved aspect and condition holistically.

Related to validity, external and internal bias challenges also require mitigation to facilitate the veracity of this study. After investing billions of dollars into foreign governments over the past 15 years (and previous to that), it is logical to assume that U.S. policy makers and invested researchers would want to prove that SFA is “worth it.” Likewise, the experiences of U.S. advisors referenced within the study would likely desire to advocate for the same, given their personal time and emotion invested. Notwithstanding the operational experiences of this researcher, having spent considerable incidence building the capacity of other nations’ security forces at the expense of familial obligations and time. Personal bias on behalf of the researcher holds that some states, like individual people, can be “too far gone.” These aspects denote the greatest potential

external and internal bias challenges to the research; spanning from policy to practice to the researcher's personal experience. Comparable to the external validity challenges, the same practice of mitigation is prescribed. Additionally, the hermeneutic nature of analyzing the literature allowed for meaning-making of the intangibles while providing for the audience to determine their own viewpoint of the findings. Intrinsically, this is perhaps one of the greater strengths of exploratory research; presenting a new perspective of the subject matter and allowing the reader to decide for oneself. Concerning internal validity challenges due to personal bias, researcher subjectivity in this subject matter was mitigated through rigorously consulting academic counsel from experienced researchers external to this study and peer reviews. Notwithstanding these concepts, the body of knowledge cannot progress without breaking new ground. Exploratory research, by its nature, seeks to continue a discussion concerning the unknown. As such, this research triangulates trends and potentials across the referenced body of knowledge and multiple source subsets to mitigate each validity and bias challenge as rigorously as possible.

### Conclusion

The research methodology seeks to provide granularity to intangible conditions and aspects within a complex environmental construct. SFA and related programs based off the condition of direct U.S. advisor support, and framed within the context of building capacity and capability in a foreign security force, is conditional on so many variables succinctly described as "human." As such, the methodology follows a logical pathway to link the trends between what SFA is, through theory-based operational construct sampling, to what SFA is meant to be, through hermeneutic analysis and heuristic visualization. The four steps detailed within this chapter provide the framework in which

this research proceeds to reach a logical conclusion to the primary research question concerning when and where SOF and CF should partner to facilitate a successful SFA program. The following chapter will aggregate the findings within the methodology towards the final conclusion and presentation of a recommended approach for SOF and CF partnership in chapter 5 (Conclusion and Recommendations).

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

Concluding the review of the literature highlighted several comparable trends with regards to the secondary research questions including:

1. Does SFA prevent conflicts?
2. Are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?
3. Are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?
4. What socio-cultural aspects of U.S. advisory elements contribute to the success or detriment of a SFA effort?

These trends contribute to attaining a logical conclusion for the primary research question through developing evaluation criteria for secondary research questions 2, 3, and 4. The secondary research question of “does SFA prevent conflicts?” provides the environmental frame in which these conditions are nested. This, in turn, provides the analytical mechanism to view the SFA environment holistically, to address the hypothesis of when and where should SOF and CF integrate to facilitate a successful SFA program. As discussed in chapter 1 (Introduction) the four aspects of the hypothesis for when and where this integration should occur includes:

1. Where the environment is not well defined or understood.
2. Where a hybrid threat exists.

3. When SOF's lack of capacity outpaces their capabilities.
4. When CFs possess the capacity, but lack the capability.

Through examining the trends within all three categories of the literature, the research highlights the weight and importance emphasized concerning environmental conditions and sociocultural aspects of the advisor that contribute to a SFA program's success or failure. When viewed through the lens of an environmental complexity model, the "gray-zone" between the duality of either success or failure demonstrates that space exists between either endstate, where external conditions draw a SFA program to either side of the continuum like a magnet. It is within this gray zone that the answer to the primary research question of when and where should SOF/CF integrate in a SFA program exists. This chapter provides a means to that end, through answering the secondary research questions, beginning with an analysis of how SFA either does or does not prevent conflict to establish a baseline for this environmental duality.

#### Security Force Assistance and Conflict Prevention

The answer to the secondary research question of "does SFA prevent conflicts?" is arguably the most problematic. Given the complexity of today's geo-political environment, and the wide spectrum of scenarios in which the U.S. conducts SFA, it is difficult to ascertain the concrete benefits that SFA provides a given state in reducing its overall risk of collapse. Doctrinal literature only assumes that conflict prevention vis-à-vis SFA is effective, while case studies and testimonials focus on the perceived positive effects following a "shoot, ready, aim" methodology. Nevertheless, several independently commissioned research sources point that SFA does, indeed, prevent conflict; albeit only under certain circumstances and with some important caveats. This is not to say that SFA

programs are not wholly unproductive under certain circumstances, but rather that the effects, both positive and negative, exist on a spectrum given certain environmental conditions.

The literature indicates that the most effective mechanism to quantitatively view the preventative benefits of SFA and related capacity building initiatives (primarily SC as the umbrella program) is through determining a state's fragility, examining potential factors which reduce or increase a state's index thereof, then examining the changing index over time when the U.S. has applied a consistent program. The state fragility index is examined as an independent variable in the equation, and is given concerning the fact that "as a country's fragility increases, the probability of domestic instability increases" (McNerney et al. 2014, 34). Data compiled to form state fragility index scores are included in figure 5.

Dimension	Measure
Security effectiveness	Total residual war
Security legitimacy	State repression
Political effectiveness	Regime/governance stability
Political legitimacy	Regime/governance inclusion
Economic effectiveness	GDP per capita
Economic legitimacy	Share of export trade in manufactured goods
Social effectiveness	Human development indicators
Social legitimacy	Infant mortality

Figure 5. State Fragility Index Dimensions

Source: Michael J. McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 34.



These eight factors, developed by the Center for Systemic Peace, serve as the academically accepted baseline for determining a state's fragility index and further determine where and when a country could potentially destabilize, given trends analyzed over time. These, in turn, are empirically applied throughout the world to determine which regions prove to be the most unstable. The most recent compilation of data for fragility indexes is included in figure 6.

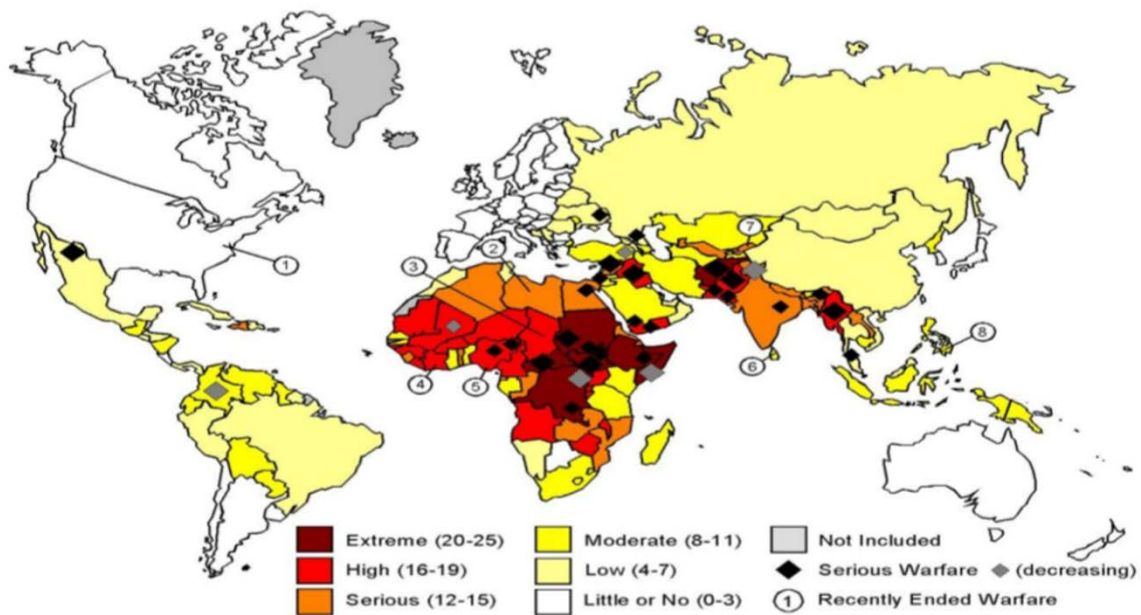


Figure 6. State Fragility Indexes from 2014

Source: Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, *Global Report 2014: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility* (Vienna, VA: Center For Systemic Peace, 2014), 14.

As illustrated above, states analyzed under the fragility index model were categorized from a factor of “0” (no instability) to “25” (extreme instability or ‘failed state’). Of note, the presence of a conflict does not necessarily signify a failed or failing

state (i.e. Mexico or Ukraine) and likewise some states with “high instability” did not necessarily have a pre-existing internal conflict (i.e. Mauritania or Zimbabwe). However, all states categorized under “extreme” had one or more internal conflicts between various factions ongoing. This is significant given the nature of this study, as the Center for Systemic Peace’s data demonstrates that fragility is arguably caused by a spectrum of social issues, and that the pre-existence of a conflict is a strong environmental condition leading towards a failed or failing state. Furthermore, this aspect sets the groundwork for determining whether or not SFA is effective at preventing conflicts, and in circumstances where SFA has achieved a positive effect, how far reaching those benefits are towards improving a state’s stability.

The independently commissioned research literature correlated certain persistent U.S. sponsored SC programs with the Center for Systemic Peace’s fragility index data to determine if capacity building programs did or did not reduce a given state’s overall fragility rating. In *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventative Tool*, RAND Corporation analysts examined 107 countries in which the U.S. had vested SC programs from 1991 to 2008, to determine if capacity building initiatives in a foreign country’s military had the desired preventative effect. Within this study, several compelling conclusions emerged. First, the study indicated that a correlation does exist between SC and improvements in a country’s stability, but is conditional on several partner country characteristics. For purposes of this research, their perspective was taken into account for the next secondary research question “are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?”, while balancing out the perspectives of the other sources. Regardless, this conclusion lends viability to the notion

that SFA does accomplish a preventative effect. Pursuant to this research, the type of capacity building program mattered. Broken into four groupings of provided assistance including foreign military funding, other train and equip (short duration advisor training), education (expert exchanges, mobile training programs, military student exchanges), and counter-narcotics (including counter-terrorism training); the research correlated a marked reduction in a state's fragility index over the studied period. Figure 7 denotes the fragility reduction effects for a cross-sampling of the study's 107 involved countries, as well as the major types of military assistance provided within.

Country	SC Funding (\$M)	Change in SFI 1995–2008	Primary Source of SC Funding	Major Command	Key Observation
Colombia	7,591	14→12	Counternarcotics and law enforcement	SOUTHCOM	Most observers argue SC had major effect
Jordan	3,043	9→6	FMF	CENTCOM	Improved military effectiveness; advanced U.S. policies
Philippines	708	15→12	FMF Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency	PACOM	Large variation in U.S. SC policies
Georgia	337	14→9	Balanced	EUCOM	Retrain WMD scientists; stabilize restive areas; strengthen security capabilities
Yemen	131	18→16	Balanced	CENTCOM	SC effect depends on state characteristics
Honduras	110	13→8	Counternarcotics and law enforcement	SOUTHCOM	Military education a priority
Guatemala	102	20→11	Counternarcotics and law enforcement	SOUTHCOM	Professionalize military sector; improve disaster response
Azerbaijan	77	19→13	FMF	EUCOM	Improve NATO interoperability
Bangladesh	74	20→12	FMF Other train and equip	PACOM	Help professionalize military
Armenia	59	8→7	FMF	EUCOM	Improve NATO interoperability
Mali	24	20→14	Other train and equip	AFRICOM	Helped maintain security
Niger	24	20→18	Counterterrorism	AFRICOM	SC effect inconclusive

Figure 7. Capacity Building Program Effects

Source: Michael J. McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 82.

Furthermore, the effects measured by this study indicated that SC has a better result in less fragile countries, as opposed to countries with a “high” or “extreme”

fragility index rating. Important to the findings of this research is their conclusion that a given state can be “too far gone” to benefit from the effects of capacity building programs, denoting that a zone of failure or diminishing returns does exist:

Our findings suggest that, in situations of high fragility, SC is not sufficient to stave off instability because highly fragile partner states may not be able to use SC effectively. This point highlights the importance of prevention (e.g., preventing states from descending to a level of fragility from which it is difficult to recover). (McNerney et al. 2014, 94)

Other independently commissioned research sources focused less on the quantitative aspects through the fragility index methodology and instead concentrated on more qualitative aspects. Two other independently commissioned studies from the RAND Corporation utilized the Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool as part of a qualitative comparison analysis study to determine if programs designed to build partner capacity accomplished their intended purpose at making FSF more capable. In *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances* and a second, similar study focused on Build Partner Capacity (BPC) programs under challenging contexts, RAND analysts took 29 historical case studies of U.S. BPC efforts and cross examined current Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool assessments of involved countries with real or estimated ratings at each programs’ inception to determine if and how these programs accomplished their desired effect. These effects, however, were less derivative of analyzing a state’s security environment as opposed to how effective U.S. advisors perceived their FSF partners were at accomplishing their respective jobs to Western standards. Their findings, while advertised as determinate in the effectiveness of a BPC program towards improving a state’s security, instead focused on advisor perceptions of FSF based off Western evaluation techniques (i.e. the Defense

Sector Assessment Rating Tool). Arguably, the Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool focuses more on the given measures of performance for a specific BPC program, such as “number of FSF trained,” “FSF tactical proficiency,” and “FSF equipment readiness,” in comparison to less tangible environmental atmospherics of improving or degrading security indicators. While these aspects of advisor programs are important for determining if advisor techniques are effective, it accomplishes little to demonstrate how a program affects the overall security environment.

Other research sources, including advisor testimonials and case studies, echo the difficulty in tangibly measuring whether or not SFA actually renders states more stable. Comparable to the independently commissioned research, the other sources argue that SFA effects will vary in accordance with a country’s geopolitical environment, and can only be assessed through observable atmospherics, which preclude quantitative analysis. These other “measures of effectiveness” challenge researchers’ and policy makers’ ability to provide concrete proof that the preventative hypothesis of capacity building programs actually work. Examples of these measure of effectiveness could include “number of children playing soccer in the streets,” “number of shops open during the day,” and “number of broken windows visible in public buildings” (Potter 2006, 17). Variables such as these, while they provide important atmospheric information at the tactical level, accomplish little to paint an overall picture of the overarching security environment within time and space. Nevertheless, testimonials of both advisor and FSF recipients elucidate that environmental atmospherics of “how the streets feel”, provide an important indicator as to if the security situation in a given area is beginning to improve.

As indicated in the research, over-estimating the preventative nature of capacity building programs comprises a cautionary tale for policy makers and strategists. Allegorically compared, SFA contributions to improving a state's security environment works like brushing teeth prevents tooth decay. Sufficient infrastructure, in decent repair, must exist for the activities to have the desired effect. Consequently, 'tooth brushing' cannot fill existing cavities or fix a periodontal infection. Expensive toothpaste will not fix the problem, nor will a high-tech sonar brush. Such ailments require a more invasive procedure. Arguably, the same comparison applies to SFA and its effects on state fragility: pre-existing environmental conditions weigh substantially on its success or failure, and some states are beyond the remedial reach of U.S. provided military assistance. The conclusion of the data analysis for this research question indicates that SFA does prevent conflicts, in certain circumstances, and that a zone exists between success and failure that is exploitable through the application of U.S Military capability with matched capacity. The next section of this chapter focuses on those environmental conditions, specifically which ones the research literature indicated are most important towards setting the conditions for a successful SFA program.

#### Environmental Conditions Contributing to SFA Success

As discussed in the previous section, addressing whether or not SFA is effective at preventing conflict provides the context to determine if zones of success or failure exist with regards to environmental conditions external to the U.S. advisor. The conclusion of the research holds that the presumptive hypothesis surrounding SFA is correct in part, specifically that SFA does prevent conflicts but is more likely to succeed given certain geo-political environments as opposed to others. Moreover, this duality between success

and failure exists on a spectrum, that arguably ranges from more to less complex. Given these findings, an examination of the literature to determine which of these conditions are more important to contribute to the success of an SFA program poses the second step of answering the primary research question of when and where SOF and CF should partner to increase the likelihood of a successful endstate.

As discussed in chapter 3 (Research Methodology), examining the three types of existing literature including U.S. military doctrine—policy, independently commissioned research, and other sources including testimonials and advisor lessons learned articles, demonstrates the importance of environmental conditions given frequency and emphasis. Within this framework, the conditions were prioritized and ranked according to a prescribed emphasis factor, in accordance with their appearance across the three source types, and then by their subsequent presence within separate literature sources of the same category. With regards to the circumstance in which two or more variables received the same emphasis rating, priority was given to conditions that appeared across differing research sources, and then based off hermeneutic analysis of their perceived relative emphasis within the literature. Table 2 shows the results of this research analysis, with a following discussion to provide context as to the highlighted environmental conditions’ importance towards answering the primary research question.

Table 2. Positive Socio-Environmental Conditions Contributing to Successful SFA

	Doctrine / Policy	Independent Research	Other Research/Testimonials	Emphasis Factor
<b>HN Popular Support</b>	X X X (3)	X (1)	X X X X (4)	<b>8</b>
<b>Effective HN Gov't Institutions</b>	X X (2)	X X (2)	X X (2)	<b>6</b>
<b>HN Commitment to SFA</b>	X X (2)	X (1)	X X (2)	<b>5</b>
PF High Absorbative Capacity	X X X (3)	X (1)	{0}	4
Strong Economy	{0}	X (1)	X (1)	2 (+)
Co-variance of Governance	{0}	X X (2)	{0}	2
Co-variance of Culture	{0}	X (1)	{0}	1

Source: Created by author.

Within the literature, the top three external environmental conditions that contribute to a successful SFA program consist of HN popular support (emphasis factor of 8), effective HN governmental institutions (emphasis factor of 6), and HN commitment to a SFA program (emphasis factor of 5). These three conditions appeared throughout all three research source subtypes, indicating their relative importance doctrinally, academically, and vis-à-vis operational advisor experience. The other remaining four environmental conditions, while most military and academic professionals would argue are still important, categorically received less emphasis throughout all three research source subtypes and were not included analytically with regards to answering the primary research question.

Host Nation popular support received the highest emphasis factor, signifying the environmental presence thereof as an important indicator of a successful SFA program. Logically as well as functionally, this is justified by the simple pretext that if a given state's people and-or politicians do not desire a U.S. Military presence, then achieving a successful endstate will most likely be extremely difficult. Specific emphasis for this condition was given concerning U.S. advisor operational experience, as this aspect appeared four separate times in testimonials and lessons learned literature. U.S. doctrine echoed this emphasis, as it appeared three separate times; while the independently commissioned research mentioned this condition only once. This seems to indicate the relative importance that U.S. advisors with tactical experience perceive HN popular support, in contribution to a SFA program's success. One such advisor devised three conditions which he believed were crucial to successful SFA; HN popular support comprised an important condition based off his analysis and operational experience: The



people (must) will support a professional indigenous security force (military, paramilitary, or police) with some western influence to be responsible for their security (Potter 2006, 74). In *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts*, RAND corporation analysts discussed the importance of popular support in terms of sharing congruent objectives with the HN, and how important receiving indigenous “buy-in” is to successful BPC programs, stating that “BPC is most effective when U.S. objectives align with PN objectives” (Paul et al. 2013, 87). This indicates that popular support, attained through shared interests, is critical to a program’s continuation. Throughout all literature categories, HN popular support received comparable emphasis as a critical condition to successful SFA programs.

Effective HN government institutions received the second highest emphasis rating, with equal emphasis across all three research source categories. This environmental condition encompasses the capability of HN government agencies to accomplish their intended purposes of managing the state and supporting their indigenous security forces. Doctrine emphasizes the importance of effective HN government in terms of state capacity in this context:

[E]lements of government should exist to support the increased capability and capacity of FSF and their supporting institutions. Adequate funding and economic and banking processes should exist and function effectively to allow for financial support of the security sector. Adequate transportation systems should also function effectively. For example, air traffic control, airfield navigation devices (24 hour, all weather) might be required. Road, rail, and river distribution systems might be required to support adequate logistical support of FSF. (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, IV-9)

Historical anecdotes provide additional emphasis as to the importance of HN government and their role in assuring the self-reliance of indigenous FSF. In *On Point II*,

General David Petraeus (then commander, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq) echoes this sentiment in June 2004:

I talked about ministry capability being absolutely crucial. But it was recognized some months back that we can develop all the battalions, brigades, divisions, and ground forces, and police, and so forth, in the world, but they have got to be supportable and supported by the Ministries of Defense and Interior to ensure eventual self-reliance and transition to complete Iraqi control. (Reese and Wright 2008, 453)

Simply stated and as indicated throughout the research literature, effective HN government institutions comprise the fertile ground from which sustainable crops of capable FSF can grow and thrive.

Finally, HN commitment to SFA received the third highest emphasis category. Equally represented in doctrinal publications and advisor testimonials, HN commitment consists of indigenous willingness to match advisor efforts in terms of vested time and resources. Arguably interrelated to both popular support and effective government institutions, the basic premise highlighted across the research sources indicated that the more a HN invested their own resources into a SFA program, the more successful the program grows. Of note, HN commitment appeared equally across all research source subtypes, receiving a sub-emphasis factor of “2” in each category. This, of itself, demonstrates that HN commitment, while perhaps not the most emphasized, is the most agreed upon environmental condition that contributes to a successful SFA program.

In conclusion, one can see how the positive environmental conditions of HN popular support, effective HN government institutions, and HN commitment to SFA are interrelated and could theoretically build momentum within each other in contribution to a SFA program’s success. Given the hermeneutic nature of this research analysis, a valid argument can be made that each of these conditions are not separate but rather exist as a

system of social phenomena that kinetically moves within itself like an internal combustion engine. The same can be said concerning the listed environmental conditions that received less emphasis than the top three. One can assert that “co-variance of culture” is not a separate phenomenon, but rather a sub-category of HN popular support. Of course people who are similar are more likely to “get along!” In that vein, speculation and discussion may never cease if boundaries are not defined. Regardless, for the sake of this study, the phenomena selected to address the primary research question focuses on their independent appearance and subjective emphasis within the research material. In the following section, data analysis and presentation for environmental conditions deemed most detrimental to SFA will serve to provide further context to the hypothesized zones of success and failure.

#### Environmental Conditions Contributing to SFA Failure

A common pitfall that this research attempted to avoid is “logical contradiction.” For example, if one of the most important environmental conditions contributing to a successful SFA program is “HN popular support,” then should not the absence thereof receive equal emphasis as a condition that contributes to the zone of failure? Interestingly enough, the findings in the research do not indicate this is the case. Environmental conditions contributing to the failure of SFA were logged and categorized only if a research source mentioned the condition specifically as a disrupter, as opposed to logically contradicting the findings in the previous section. Nevertheless, the research sources did emphasize several direct contradictions to findings in the previous section, which further validates the findings of both secondary research questions. Table 3

contains the synopsis of emphasized negative conditions, which push a SFA initiative towards the zone of failure.

Table 3. Negative Socio-Environmental Conditions Contributing to Unsuccessful SFA

	Doctrine / Policy	Independent Research	Other Research/Testimonials	Emphasis Factor
<b>Pre-Existing Conflict</b>	X X (2)	X X X (3)	X X X X X (5)	<b>10</b>
<b>HN Corruption</b>	X X (2)	X X (2)	X X X X (4)	<b>8</b>
<b>Ineffective HN Gov't Institutions</b>	X X (2)	X X (2)	X X X (3)	<b>7</b>
Low Economic Development	X (1)	X X (2)	X X X (3)	6 (+)
Lack of HN Commitment to SFA	(0)	X X X (3)	X X X (3)	6
Presence of Human Rights Violations	X (1)	(0)	X (1)	2 (+)
Advisor/PF Cultural Incompatibility	(0)	(0)	X X (2)	2
Lack of HN Popular Support	(0)	X (1)	(0)	1 (+)
Lack of Centralized Government	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1

Source: Created by author.

Findings in the research indicated there are nine prominent, negative environmental conditions, which are detrimental to a SFA program. Of these nine, the top three emphasized factors consist of a pre-existing conflict (emphasis factor of 10), HN corruption (emphasis factor of 8), and ineffective government institutions (emphasis factor of 7. Each of these conditions were specifically mentioned within the literature, as opposed to forming a logical contradiction to the positive conditions detailed in the previous section. Of note, the negative environmental condition of “pre-existing conflict” received the highest emphasis rating out of all variables in the two environmental phenomena subcategories contained within this study. Significantly emphasized within the three research source types, pre-existing conflict comprises a substantial disruptor to a SFA program. One research source alluded that a pre-existing conflict will eventually guarantee the failure of any capacity building program. All research sources agreed that pre-existing conflict is a substantial issue contributing to a SFA program’s detriment.

Another research source indicated that pre-existing conflict throws off the sociological balance of many other phenomena within a state. Speaking specifically on SFA efforts in Afghanistan, “it is a considerable challenge to develop security forces in a socio-economic environment like Afghanistan—especially under conditions of continuing conflict, where the forces being built are already in the fight” (Kelly, Bensahel, and Oliker 2011, 8). Doctrine further emphasizes the challenge of conducting SFA during a conflict, as “conducting SFA activities in the midst of an insurgency or major combat operation has proven a difficult challenge for U.S. forces” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, III-10). The general trends within the rest of the research material discuss how pre-existing conflict deprives FSF of basic foundational requirements, including tangibles such as resources and secure areas to train, and intangibles consisting of legitimacy and relevancy. Returning to the farming allegory, pre-existing conflict equates to the weeds which choke the crop of capable FSF.

Host Nation corruption received the second highest emphasis within the research, which alludes to not only dysfunctional behavior within a state’s government but also within the FSF as well. Within the literature, corruption was encased on a spectrum from simple nepotism (positional favoritism based off personal relationships as opposed to merit) to financial collusion with third party entities, hostile to the state in question. In this regard, some cases of what the West would label “corruption” is actually beneficial in certain cultures and an important aspect of the social fabric. This exists on the less harmful end of the corruption spectrum. The more malign brand of corruption, including government officials bargaining with insurgents for personal profit and gain, is consistent with the detrimental aspect of this environmental condition. Pursuant to that end,

corruption, when viewed as negative in the eyes of the local populace, causes the state's authorities and FSF to hemorrhage legitimacy. In that corruption is tied to declining legitimacy is a critical factor in capacity building efforts. One source stated, in terms of Afghanistan, that difficulties arise in maintaining stability when "government weakness, corruption, misrule, and perceived lack of legitimacy at the village and district level allows militias, warlords, and criminals to reassert themselves" (Kilcullen 2009, 47). When coupled with a pre-existing conflict, the presence of rampant corruption hampers capacity building efforts significantly.

Finally, lack of effective HN government institutions comprised the third most emphasized, detrimental environmental condition. Given the fact the literature named ineffective institutions in juxtapose to the related positive environmental condition, this negative aspect is all the more relevant. In *The Accidental Guerrilla*, author David Kilcullen argues that, when coupled with rampant corruption and a pre-existing conflict, ineffective institutions create the conditions for a power vacuum that maligned third party actors exploit for their benefit: "Failure to deliver services, widespread corruption, poor coordination between central, provincial, and local authorities, abusive behavior by some local officials and lack of government presence creates space for non-state armed groups and criminal networks" (Kilcullen 2009, 47).

Academically, RAND corporation analysts provide the bottom-line for ineffective institutions and their effect on a state's absorptive capacity to effectively utilize military aid, "SC was less correlated with improvements in fragility in regions with weak state institutions, low state reach, and autocratic regimes" (McNerney et al. 2014, 92). Much like the aforementioned positive environmental conditions, the detrimental conditions

detailed within this portion of the research highlights how each phenomenon is interrelated and part of an interworking system of systems. The research concludes that both systems, positive and negative, develop their own brand of social kinetic energy that feeds itself and internally combusts, driving other factors towards an eventual end for either success or failure. Nevertheless, the analysis for both positive and negative conditions shows that the boundaries between zones of success or failure for a SFA program lack hard lines, but are rather fluid in nature. It is within the gray zone between the duality of success or failure where a valid prescription for the application of U.S. military capability with matched capacity exists to drive a SFA program to a positive endstate.

#### Positive Aspects of U.S. Advisors and SFA Programs

Having concluded the analysis of positive and negative environmental conditions, the research progresses to discover what aspects of U.S. advisors and SFA programs, both positive and negative, can feed into either previously discussed environmental system. Beginning with the most positive aspects, the research was conclusive in several regards. First, the research details that not anyone can be a good advisor, but rather a good advisor can come from anywhere. Needless to say, the literature, as a general trend, gives preference to SOF for their specific training, experience, and know-how; but the majority of traits examined are typically personality dependent and autonomous from such specialized training. This lends to the credence that effective advisors, as well as ineffective, will vary on an individual basis. Forthcoming analysis will show how these traits can have positive or negative effects on an environmental system. For this section

of the research, table 4 shows the major conclusions of emphasis that the research placed on positive socio-cultural aspects of American advisors and SFA programs.

Table 4. Positive Socio-Cultural Aspects of American Advisors and SFA Programs

	Doctrine / Policy	Independent Research	Other Research/Testimonials	Emphasis Factor
Long Term Outlook (Patience)	X X X (3)	X X X X (4)	X X X X X X X (7)	14
Cultural Awareness / Understand the Operational Environment	X X X (3)	X X (2)	X X X X X X (6)	11
Experience	X X X (3)	X X (2)	X X X X (4)	9 (+)
Capabilities Matching	X X X (3)	X X X (3)	X X X (3)	9
Flexibility / Agility / Adaptiveness	X X (2)	X X X (3)	X X (2)	8
Ability to Operate in a JIIM Environment	X X X (3)	X (1)	X X (2)	6
Empathetic	X (1)	(0)	X X (2)	3 (+)
Creative	X X (2)	(0)	X (1)	3
Respect	X (1)	(0)	X (1)	2
Comfortable with Ambiguity	X (1)	(0)	X (1)	2
Humility	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1

*Source:* Created by author.

The first major conclusion of the research indicates that a long-term outlook (on a program level) or “patience” (as an individual advisor trait) comprises the most significant positive socio-cultural aspect for American advisors. Receiving an overall emphasis rating of 14, this aspect scored the highest for any named social phenomenon within this study, and is generally viewed throughout the literature as critical to a positive endstate for SFA. Patience applies in an SFA environment not only at the individual advisor level, but also at the policy and program levels. Building capacity takes time, is arguably frustrating, and requires an outlook that transcends individual deployments. The “long-term” outlook, and its importance, is highlighted throughout all sub-categories of the research sources. Doctrine links the concept of patience to the positive environmental condition of HN popular support and related “buy-in” accordingly, as “the relevant population must perceive FSF as legitimate for long-term success” (Department of the



Army 2009, 2-1) and “SFA is often a slow process that does not lend itself to quick solutions. To ensure long-term success, commanders and HN clarify early what conditions they desire” (Department of the Army 2009, 3-2).

The second most emphasized variable is the component of “cultural awareness” or understanding the operational environment. Given the nature of SFA and the aspects of foreign advisement, cultural understanding when coupled with patience provides a foundation for relationship building with partnered forces and government entities. Receiving an overall emphasis rating of 11, the research concluded that cultural awareness and environmental understanding is a critical component of successful foreign advisement and SFA program implementation. Operational experience alludes to the linkages between understanding and patience, and how this awareness is cultivated over time to produce an effective advisor to partner relationship:

We have been together for weeks and months, establishing a rhythm for each day’s responsibilities. We know each other’s moods and how to work with the other and, most importantly, how to be respectful of the other. We know each other’s sleep cycle and how to maximize the use of our time together. This comes from a genuine respect for each other and a sincere desire to improve our relationship. (Potter 2006, 5)

The concept of awareness extends out from not only relationships with foreign partners, but to the greater environment as a whole. Doctrine emphasizes that “units and Soldiers conducting SFA must clearly understand the theater, population, and FSF with which they are working, especially FSF capabilities. Diplomatic, informational, military, economic, sociological, psychological, and geographic research and understanding are essential prerequisites for successful SFA” (Department of the Army 2009, 2-1).

Finally, the research concluded that “experience” comprised the third most emphasized positive sociocultural aspect contributing to successful SFA programs.

Experience results not from training, but operationally experiencing foreign capacity building initiatives. Receiving an overall emphasis rating of 9, experience was highly valued throughout all research source subcategories due to the concept that it mitigates the likelihood of U.S. advisors making mistakes in strategic environments, while also building resiliency in the other positive sociocultural aspects.

#### Undesirable Aspects of U.S. Advisors and SFA Programs

The findings for the secondary research questions conclude with an examination of which sociocultural aspects of U.S. advisors and SFA programs could be detrimental to a positive endstate. In this regard, the research proved generally inconclusive. No independently observed negative aspects correlated across the research source spectrum. Doctrine and policy made no mention of undesired characteristics, and the independent research only mentioned a single detrimental aspect. All documented, negative aspects appeared in the other research sources consisting of advisor testimonials, journal articles, and lessons learned material. The top three negative aspects each received an overall emphasis factor rating of “2.” This is significant given the overwhelming emphasis that the research sources placed on environmental conditions and positive aspects. Several conclusions from this observation merit further discussion, pending analysis of what negative aspects the research nominally observed as detrimental to SFA, contained in table 5.

Table 5. Negative Socio-Cultural Aspects of American Advisors and SFA Programs

	Doctrine / Policy	Independent Research	Other Research/Testimonials	Emphasis Factor
<b>Ethnocentric</b>	(0)	(0)	X X (2)	2 (+)
<b>Impatience</b>	(0)	(0)	X X (2)	2
<b>Lack of Cultural Understanding</b>	(0)	(0)	X X (2)	2
Inexperience	(0)	X (1)	(0)	1 (+)
Risk Adverse	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1
Overbearing	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1
Presumptuous	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1
Disrespectful	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1
Short-sighted	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1
Stubborn	(0)	(0)	X (1)	1

Source: Created by author.

The top three undesired aspects of U.S. advisors, earmarked as detrimental to SFA efforts, consist of ethnocentricity, impatience, and lack of cultural understanding. Each aspect received an overall emphasis rating factor of 2; no factor correlated across different research source subtypes. Prioritized emphasis was determined subjectively by the researcher, based off perceived emphasis within the research literature. As with the previous three variable categories, a strong argument can be made as to each aspects' interrelation to one another. Despite the lack of correlation across the research, this concept of aspects contributing to environmental conditions remains valid. Ethnocentricity received the highest categorization due to this concept of interrelation and third order effects. Ethnocentricity revolves around the belief that one's culture is superior than another's; this fallacy belies the notion of cultural understanding and instead attempts to imprint a viewpoint that certain cultural characteristics should be adopted by another, regardless of circumstance. This is arguably a dangerous mentality, given the notion that even under altruistic impressions, ethnocentricity will attempt to divorce solutions from cultural context in ways that foreign partners will neither appreciate, nor adopt. A common pitfall exemplified by this notion is the concept that "If

it works in my country, it will work in country X!” History and experience will show this could not be further from the truth. Impatience received the second highest emphasis priority due to its juxtaposition to stated SFA imperatives and the criticality of a long-term outlook towards successful BPC initiatives. Finally, lack of cultural understanding rounds out the top least desired aspects. Related to ethno-centricity, but stemming more from a lack of experience vice misplaced notions of cultural superiority, lack of cultural understanding also juxtaposes doctrinal SFA imperatives and other conclusions within this research.

In conclusion, the lack of emphasis across the research material for undesired sociocultural aspects raises more questions than they answer. For example, why is the existing literature so quick state “what will work” as opposed to “what won’t?” Several possible conclusions emerge. On a more positive outlook, perhaps it is more beneficial to discuss the positive indicators as opposed to focusing on the negative. A different view might assume this concept stems from a lack of institutional self-criticality and organizational self-honesty. Regardless, the general trend within the literature is that environmental conditions and aspects are, to some degree, all interrelated. The final section of this chapter will array the findings of the secondary research questions in order to answer the primary focus of when and where should SOF and CF integrate to facilitate a successful SFA program.

#### Environmental Complexity: Where SOF/CF I3 Matters

The conclusion of the secondary research questions yielded several results with reference to the primary research question. First, concerning “does SFA prevent conflicts?”, the conclusions indicate that SFA does reduce the fragility index of states

with certain environmental characteristics. The answer to this question set the foundation of addressing the follow-on questions concerning “are there environmental conditions within a state that are required to ensure a successful SFA program?” and “are there environmental conditions within a state that are detrimental to a SFA effort?” Through cross examining the three research source subcategories, the environmental conditions of HN popular support, effective HN government institutions, and HN commitment to SFA, were determined as highly important in contributing to a successful SFA initiative.

Likewise, through the same analysis techniques, the research denoted that the environmental conditions of a pre-existing conflict, corruption, and ineffective HN government institutions will severely hinder the HN’s ability to apply the remedial benefits of capacity building programs. Finally, concerning the positive and negative sociocultural aspects of U.S. advisors, the research affirmatively emphasized the importance of patience, cultural awareness, and experience as critical components of a successful advisory effort. However, the research was generally inconclusive concerning the undesired sociocultural aspects of U.S. advisors, insufficient correlation exists in the research material to generate a substantive conclusion for what does not work. However, trends within the literature, coupled with hermeneutic interpretation, produced the conclusion with fair academic confidence that the negative sociocultural aspects of ethnocentricity, impatience, and lack of cultural awareness prove to be the most detrimental to a SFA effort.

The research conclusions, when arrayed holistically, denote that the spectrum of SFA activities exist within an array of geopolitical environments that trend between more and less complex. When coupled with the environmental conditions and socio-cultural

aspects, the picture produced shows that a zone of success and zone of failure exists as a duality; in between both is an undefined zone where the endstate of a SFA effort remains undecided. The conclusions of the secondary research questions, depicted as an environmental complexity model in figure 8, shows how this duality exists. The heuristic interpretation of this model, as applied against the hypothesis of the primary research question, will conclude the findings of this research and demonstrate “when” and “where” SOF and CF should partner to ensure the success of a SFA program.

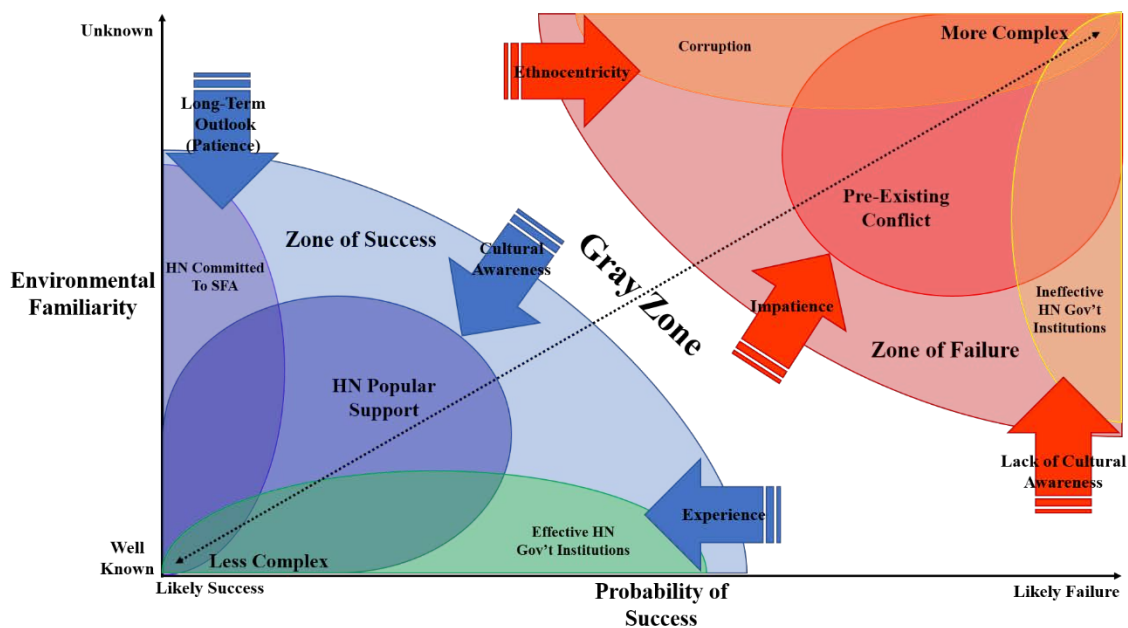


Figure 8. Environmental Complexity and Security Force Assistance

*Source:* Created by author.

As depicted in the environmental complexity model, the three zones (success, failure, and gray) exist on a broad spectrum between likely success and likely failure, where the relative familiarity of the environment (from the advisor perspective) fluctuates

from well-known to unknown. Heuristically interpreted, based off the research findings, the zone of success generally exists on the less complex side of the spectrum, while the zone of failure resides where the environment is typically more complex and volatile. Within each zone, the environmental conditions as discovered in the research are depicted to demonstrate their contributions to each zones' trending endstate. The sociocultural aspects of the advisor are likewise depicted to show how the positive or negative inputs of U.S. advisors contribute to the zones of success or failure. As previously discussed, these zones lack concrete boundaries, and instead exist as systems of kinetic and interrelated social phenomena. Given this duality, the framework for a gray zone is established, where the environmental conditions suspend a potential endstate for a SFA effort as a non-polarized object suspended between two magnets. It is against this backdrop that we apply the hypothesis of the primary research question to determine a plausible conclusion.

As discussed in previous chapters, the proposed hypothesis for consideration includes the following conditions for when and where SOF and CF should integrate to ensure the success of a SFA program:

1. Where the environment is not well defined or understood.
2. Where a hybrid threat exists.
3. When SOF's lack of capacity outpaces their capabilities.
4. When CFs possess the capacity, but lack the capability.

When applied against the environmental complexity model depicted in figure 8, the following interpretations provide a conclusion to the primary research question. Figure 9 depicts a "Zone of I3," where the findings of the research conclude when and

where SOF and CF should integrate to positively affect the outcome of a SFA program, which is generally either on the edge of likely failure or immediately before likely success.

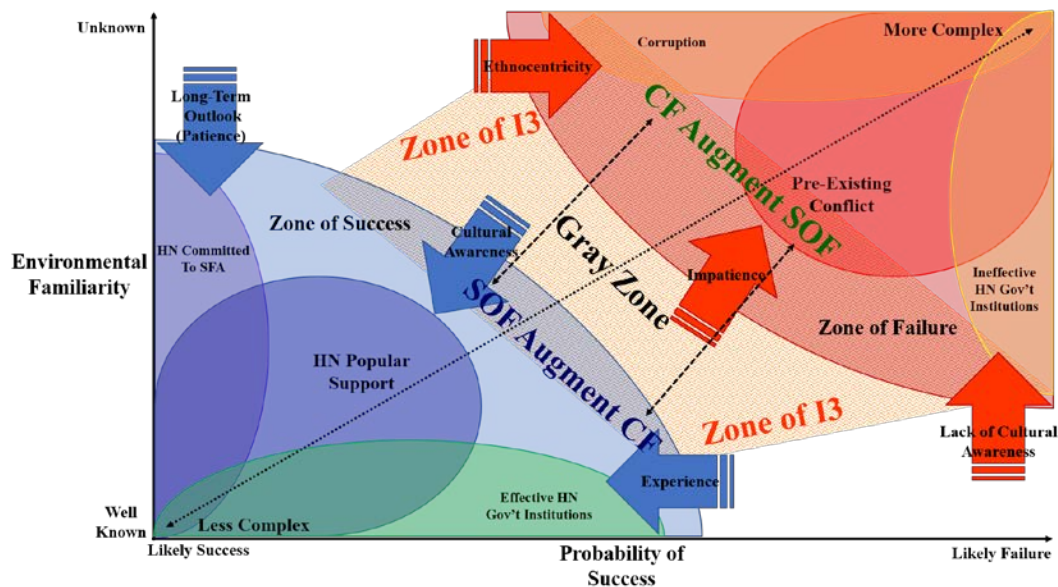


Figure 9. Environmental Complexity, SFA, and I3 Zone

Source: Created by author.

Concerning the hypothetical, “where the environment isn’t well defined or understood”, the existence of a gray zone in the completed environmental complexity model shows that the most likely area where CF can partner with SOF lies within the middle of the complexity spectrum. This location, within time and space, is ideal for SOF and CF I3 given the precepts that the “magnetized” influence of either the zones of success or failure have not rendered the endstate of the SFA program as likely towards either end of the spectrum. It is within this zone that SOF can assist CFs with their unique experience, training, and cultural expertise. Furthermore, the centric nature of the I3 zone



within the environmental complexity model denotes that, while the environment is not well understood, it is not complex to an absolute point as to be “unknowable”. This confirms the first portion of the research’s hypothesis for when and where SOF and CF should integrate.

The research conclusion that a pre-existing conflict is a critical environmental condition that contributes to unsuccessful SFA is an important determinant concerning the second portion of the primary hypothesis, “where a hybrid threat exists”. Interpreted based off this finding, the depicted zone of I3 indicates that a combined SOF and CF solution could potentially bring a SFA program out of the zone of failure, and change the environmental conditions as to support a successful outcome. This educated presumption revolves around the concept that SOF and CF both leverage their respective strengths in this scenario. As purveyors of indigenous warfare, SOF work by, with, and through the local population to isolate the threat and work with FSF partners to form an indigenous solution to an indigenous problem. CFs prowess for combined arms maneuver and wide area security utilize their strength relative to capacity and tactics to facilitate a secure and stable environment. Of note, it is important to highlight that the projected zone of I3 only progresses so far into the zone of failure. This is indicative that if the environment becomes too complex and volatile, then SFA has failed. Therefore, the military solution to this issue has transcended from a preventative, remedial approach to a high intensity conflict scenario. This concept partially confirms the second portion of the hypothesis, that SOF and CF can positively affect a SFA program where a hybrid threat exists, so long as the hybrid threat has not destabilized the environment to the point where the conflict requires a combined arms maneuver prescription.

The third and fourth portions of the hypothesis, “when SOF’s lack of capacity outpaces their capabilities” and “when CFs possess the capacity, but lack the capability,” are interrelated and arguably the most ambiguous portion of the primary research question. SOF, by their nature, will always be smaller, with emphasis on spending training resources on building capability at the individual level. Comparatively, CF will always be larger, and will emphasize training capability at the unit level. Foreign capacity building programs arguably don’t require a substantial investment in manpower regarding advisor to indigenous ratios. By doctrine, a 12-man Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha (SFOD-A) is capable enough to train and advise an indigenous military unit of up to battalion size (~650 men). However, in terms of building a given HN’s security forces in their entirety from the ground up, the whole of SOF cannot possibly address such a large task without augmentation. Likewise, CF units arguably possess the tactics and know-how to train and advise other military units. This occurs all the time in training environments across the U.S., from home installation collective training to BDE level rotations at the Combat Training Centers (CTCs). However, in foreign environments where language and cultural barriers provide additional complexity and challenges, CF arguably could not detract from an augmentation in capability. For this purpose, figure 9’s “Zone of I3” denotes a portion of the environmental spectrum where SOF could benefit from CF augmentation and vice versa. Given the nature of both elements, CF will most likely succeed unilaterally in a SFA scenario where the environment is more familiar to would-be U.S. advisors. Likewise, SOF arguably excel in complex environments where “the unknowns” are greater and the cultural context is dissimilar to Western norms. In either scenario, both CF and SOF stand to benefit from

each other's partnership. It is within this framework that the final portions of the research's hypothesis are confirmed. Complex environments requiring SOF expertise will nonetheless stand to benefit from CF augmentation when SOF's relative lack of numbers precludes the enormity of a task at hand (i.e. rebuilding a substantial portion of a state's FSF as opposed to a few units). Likewise, in environments that are more familiar, CF should take the lead in a SFA program with modest assistance from SOF capabilities.

### Conclusion

The conclusion of the research answers all four aspects of the primary hypothesis for when and where SOF and CF should integrate to facilitate the success of a SFA program. Hermeneutic interpretation of the research literature and heuristic interpretation of the proposed environmental model frames the ebb and flow of complexity in a SFA environment, and further where both CF and SOF both stand to benefit from each other's partnership. In environments that trend towards "more complex," and especially in the presence of a hybrid threat, a SOF facilitated and CF augmented approach could theoretically affect the environment to trend towards likely success. Circumspectly, in environments that are more "known," CF advisors leading a SFA program could stand to benefit from SOF augmentation to ensure the effort's positive outcome. In either circumstance, the findings in this research demonstrate that further conversation is required to determine tangible courses of action for further SOF and CF integration in foreign capacity building environments. Several recommendations to that end, will be discussed in the final chapter of this study.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The US government can improve its ability to operate effectively in the gray zone between war and peace by reshaping its intellectual, organizational and institutional models. America's conventional military dominance and status as a global power guarantee continual challenges and incentivize competitors to oppose the United States in ways designed to nullify our military advantage. The U.S. already possesses the right mix of tools to prevail in the gray zone, but it must think, organize, and act differently.

— General Joseph Votel, “The Gray Zone”

#### Introduction

As conferred within the first chapter of this study, precious little dialogue exists on the topic of SOF and CF teamwork in a combined advisory role. All of the data and research analysis contained within this project serves to establish a framework for a conversation to that end. The final conclusions and recommendations contained within this chapter are designed to open a frank discussion among military professionals and policy makers alike; with the earnest desire that a viable course of action can be formulated towards the judicious application of U.S. Military capability with matched capacity to mitigate the risk of a failed advisory effort. Therefore, the conclusion of this research organizes the data and analysis into concrete recommendations for “where and when” SOF and CFs should augment each other to facilitate a successful SFA program. Finally, the exploratory nature of this study merits a recommendation for examining how social theories provide a valuable perspective to frame complex systems issues, such as those found in a SFA environment, in order to develop a feasible operational approach.

This recommendation will answer the fifth and final secondary research question, which will conclude this comprehensive study concerning SFA and a theoretical “better way.”

### Conclusions

The data analysis and interpretation contained within chapter 4 provided several substantive deductions concerning secondary research questions 1 through 4, ultimately answering the primary research question. The bottom line for these conclusions provide merit to the assumptive title of this study; SOF and CF are “better together” when present environmental conditions paired with desired socio-cultural advisor traits translate into a recommended bi-lateral approach. Furthermore, the conclusions denote where and when SOF and CF are “best together” and in what relational circumstances, (i.e. which component should augment the other in a given environment and vice versa). These aspects will be discussed in the forthcoming recommendations contained within the next two sections of this research.

In summation of these findings, the research indicated that SFA does contribute to lessening a given state’s fragility index in certain contexts. This conclusion allowed the formulation for determining that a “zone of success” and a “zone of failure” exist as a duality that manifests itself within a SFA environment. Additionally, the caveats for where these respective zones exist set the conditions to identify the predominate environmental conditions that kinetically work together in syncopation to drive a SFA effort towards either endstate. Through cross examining the existing research material, trends across the three literature subtypes ascribed emphasis factors for those environmental conditions, which contributed most to a capacity building program’s success or detriment. Data analysis indicated that the three most emphasized positive

environmental conditions consist of “HN Popular Support,” “Effective HN Government Institutions,” and “HN Commitment to SFA.” Contrasted to these positive phenomena, the research emphasized “Pre-existing Conflict,” “Corruption,” and “Ineffective HN Government Institutions” as the most detrimental environmental conditions to successful SFA efforts. To further emphasize the nature of such phenomena, the data analysis through hermeneutic interpretation concludes that the existence of these aspects does not unilaterally guarantee SFA’s success or failure in a given geo-political environment. Rather, the observance and acknowledgement of these phenomena provide value to policy makers and military professionals in determining trends and potentials to evaluate a given state and its ability to benefit from SFA programs through a coefficient investment in U.S. military aid. In terms of the U.S. application of advisor capability, the research identified desired and undesired socio-cultural advisor aspects, which can affect the underlying geopolitical conditions in a certain environment. The most emphasized positive traits consisted of “Patience,” “Cultural Awareness—Environmental Understanding,” and “Experience.” Concerning the least desired aspects, the lack of emphasis within the literature rendered a concrete finding problematic and generally inconclusive. As such, prioritized emphasis was determined subjectively by the researcher, based off subsequent manifestation within the research and each aspects’ perceived emphasis. This resulted in the selection of “Impatience,” “Ethnocentricity,” and “Lack of Cultural Awareness” as the least desired socio-cultural advisor aspects.

The research progressed to array these conditions and aspects on an environmental complexity model to determine “where and when” the application of SOF’s and CF’s relative strengths could benefit a SFA program, and circumspectly,

where their weaknesses require augmentation to facilitate a successful endstate. The model denoted that a “gray zone” exists between the zones of success and failure, where the geopolitical conditions trend toward an inconclusive end for given capacity building programs and further where the judicious application of capability and capacity can theoretically tip the balance positively. To that end, the research indicated that conventional forces will fare better in geopolitical environments that are more familiar, leveraging their resources with regards to capacity to secure a relative advantage. Related to this, SOF’s unique training and experience renders their capability more suitable for complex and volatile environments. Interpreted heuristically, the completed complexity model denoted that a supplemental “Zone of I3” exists across the environmental spectrum where SOF could benefit from CF augmentation and vice versa. The conclusion thereof logically asserts that complex environments requiring SOF expertise will nonetheless stand to benefit from CF augmentation when SOF’s capability is eclipsed by the requirement for more advisors than is organically available. Likewise, in environments that are more familiar, CF should take the lead in a SFA program with modest assistance from SOF capabilities. It is within this framework that the data analysis provides a conclusion to the primary research question and further defines “where and when” SOF and CF are “best together.”

Prior to addressing the final recommendations of this study, a brief discussion concerning I3 will provide additional context to the conclusions therein. First, this research addresses a gap in the existing literature and doctrine regarding a proposed SOF and CF bilateral approach in an advisory effort. Plenty of discussion and historical anecdotes exist that espouse the benefits of SOF and CF partnership in high intensity

conflicts scenarios. This is not the case concerning advisory missions, which begs the question as to why this interval in the greater SOF and CF I3 discussion is so belatedly forthcoming, especially given the emphasis in which policy places capacity building efforts within the context of vital national security interests. The purpose of the research is not to answer this question *per se*, but in asking, the researcher hopes to encourage institutional introspection and self-criticality to overcome established bias within the greater military enterprise. Argumentatively, while much headway has been accomplished over the past decade of conflict in terms of SOF and CF cooperation, friction points still exist. Debates over command relationships and operational responsibilities promote a professional environment where “separate but equal” continues to perpetuate the bureaucratic *status quo*. This manifests itself in the advisory environment, to which this researcher argues as detrimental, in that U.S. SOF will generally only train FSF SOF, and likewise U.S. CF will only partner with conventional FSF. For which the counter-argument validly asserts that each component has its related function, which is relevantly imparted to a comparable foreign counterpart vis-à-vis advisement. The research does not contest this. However, this study and the forthcoming recommendations argue that SFA efforts generally lack a SOF and CF “unified approach,” that most advisory efforts are conducted separately and without regard to another parallel effort, and that this lack of synergy fails to exploit the gray zone in SFA environments, which translates into missed opportunities and lost capital in foreign military capability. In that context, the researcher argues that very little in today’s complex geopolitical environment is “conventional” and furthermore, there is no such thing as “special” beyond the greater U.S. military’s unified commitment to promoting



our national security interests to the detriment of self. The forthcoming recommendations in the following sections provide an approach mechanism to open such a discussion.

### CF Augmentation to SOF in SFA

The first recommendation consists of a viable approach for CF to augment SOF within a SFA effort. In terms of obligations, DoDI 5000.68, the overarching DoD policy document that delegates duties and responsibilities in the conduct of SFA, designates Special Operations Command as the lead joint proponent for the conduct of SFA throughout all of the Geographic Combatant Commands. This includes joint doctrine, training, and the operational implementation of SFA (Department of Defense 2010, 14). According to policy, SFA is, and always has been, a Special Operations Command facilitated DoD initiative. However, many might argue that SOF have not taken the appropriate level of ownership over these efforts. Again, this returns to the concept of capacity vice capability. The vast array of tasks accorded to SOF renders their ability to take the requisite ownership of all capacity building efforts an impossibility. The Congressional Research Service provided the following synopsis concerning this concept in 2011:

SOCOM has expressed concern over its ability to adequately resource the SFA mission. SOF have a unique capability to conduct SFA. Yet, despite their enhanced skills, SOF are ‘low density/high demand’ assets. Their skills are in high demand and there are not enough of them to accomplish all the SFA missions . . . the growing appetite for SFA missions cannot be met using only SOF. (Livingston 2011a, 32)

If SOF lack the manpower to accomplish the tasks accorded to their proponent through policy, and CF have generally had to absorb the excess demand without external support, then perhaps the greatest shortcoming is the lack of oversight afforded as both

SOF and CF attempt to address competing responsibilities while U.S. foreign capacity building investments continue to fall through the cracks. Regardless of the background, the research demonstrates that both SOF, CF, and FSF stand to benefit from a combined approach. In that vein, the recommended scenario for CF to augment a SOF-facilitated SFA effort is one where volatile instability characterizes the geopolitical environment. A latent insurgency may be forming and the HN government suffers from capacity related issues including the limited ability to provide goods and services for the people. Low level corruption may hinder the growth of government capacity, as well as cause the people to question the national leadership's legitimacy. It is within this context that the FSF as a greater enterprise require substantial improvements to prevent the state from destabilizing further. However, the state has not destabilized to the point of being "too far gone." U.S. advisory requirements for this hypothetical scenario include a significant investment of SOF capability, given the "unknowns" and relative cultural dissimilarities of the supposed environment. However, given the enormity of the task, SOF lacks the numbers to accomplish the mission alone. Figure 10 includes a hypothetical partnership model, detailing how an SF Advanced Operational Base—company command equivalent—can partner with a CF Infantry BN, to build capacity in a FSF infantry brigade.

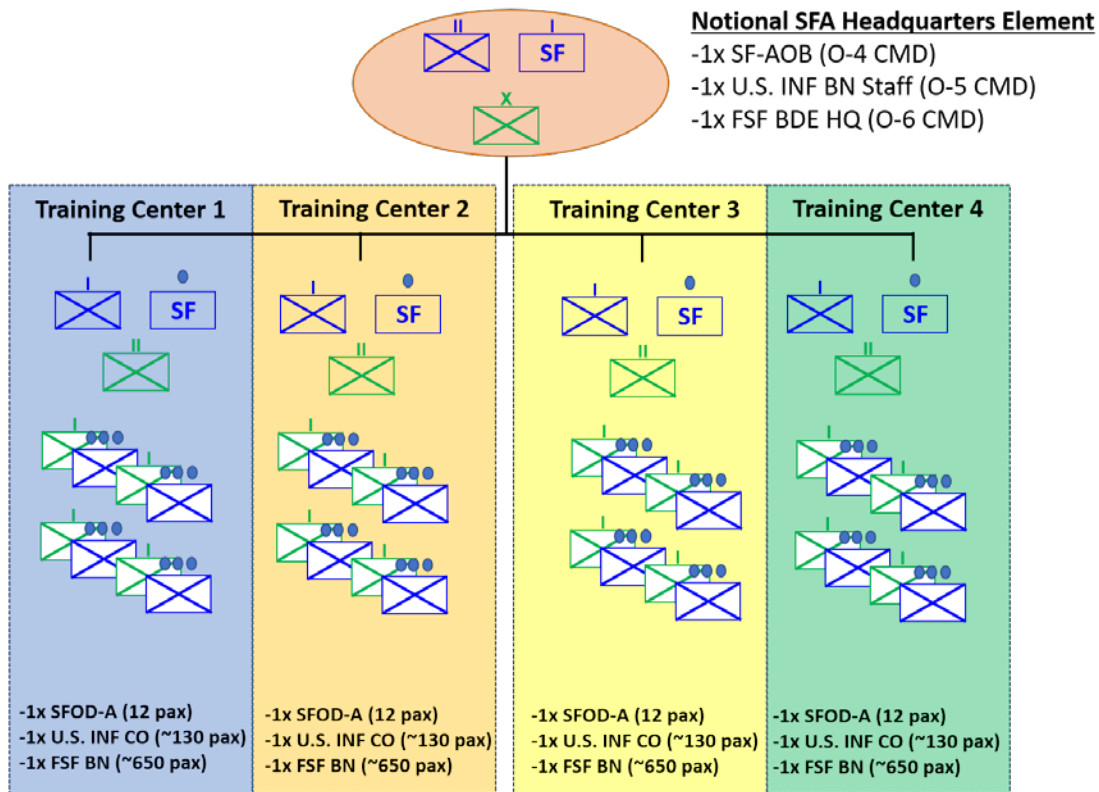


Figure 10. Hypothetical Partnership Model–CF Assist SOF

Source: Created by author.

Within this recommended model, an SF Advanced Operations Base tasked to build the capacity of an FSF brigade, partners with a CF Infantry BN in an uncertain geopolitical environment. Given the task organization of all involved elements, the combined advisory team has divided into four separate “training centers,” each facilitated by a SFOD-A and augmented by one of the U.S. infantry battalion’s rifle companies. The strengths of this hypothetical partnership model lie in the even distribution of “advisory power” across the training centers. Each training center could be in a separate location of a given country, and as such, should be autonomous with regards to force protection, internal sustainment, and training capacity. Given their inherent strengths, SF advisors

take the lead in advising the FSF, augmented by CF infantry for extra supervision and assistance.

The weaknesses of this model lie in the unique “human factors” of our own forces. For example, command relationships should be well defined as it is foreseeable that a CF Battalion Commander (Lieutenant Colonel) would not have experience with “supporting” a Special Forces Major. This is where proper institutionalization of I3 should be considered prior to implementing such a model. SFA training rotations at the CTCs, where SOF and CF build initial relationships prior to an advisory deployment, would be critical in mitigating the possibility of personality conflicts between SOF and CF. Concerning advisement focused rotations at CTCs, this has yet to occur. However, SOF and CF have already successfully partnered in CTC rotations that focus on high intensity conflict scenarios. One such rotation involving the 4th BN, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the 3/82 BCT stated the following concerning successful I3:

From the perspective of this rotation, both 3/82 BCT and 4/5 SFG determined that effective interdependence was most facilitated by command influence and command culture: leadership that continually sought opportunities to amplify mission success of the other unit based upon the inherently unique capabilities possessed by each partner. (Fenzel and Lock 2015, 32)

Much like foreign advisement, successful I3 is “other centered,” requires an unselfish outlook, humility, and building relationships above all else. A basic premise surrounding not only this hypothetical partnership model, but broader SOF and CF I3 as a whole, is “cross pollinate, don’t over complicate.” Working together well is arguably a simple concept, however perhaps more complicated in the execution thereof. Relationships built prior to deployments and advisory focused CTC rotations will arguably pay dividends

towards effectively building foreign partner capacity in complex geopolitical environments.

### SOF Augmentation to CF in SFA

The second recommendation complements the aspects of the first and details how and when SOF should augment a CF-led SFA effort. Again, the premise of “cross pollinate, do not over-complicate” applies in that successful I3 efforts should augment pre-existing structures to amplify the effects. As denoted in the research, the recommended hypothetical environment in which SOF should augment a CF-led effort is one where the geo-political phenomena trend towards less complex on the environmental spectrum. In this scenario, CF have already partnered with a given state’s FSF as part of persistent advisory presence effort. The HN government is generally capable, with modest capacity and reach. Above all, the people in a given state should generally support and recognize the legitimacy of their government and the requisite FSF. At a minimum, nominally functioning institutions should exist to support the FSF’s ability to absorb the beneficial effects of SFA. Furthermore, as depicted on the complexity model, the state may not be completely free of internal conflict, but an overt armed struggle between contesting factions should not be present. In this environment, the successful endstate of SFA is yet to be determined, and the construct of SOF and CF I3 is implemented to further “tip the balance” and affect the environmental phenomena towards a positive conclusion. Modifying a pre-existing depiction from FM 3-07.1, figure 11 shows a hypothetical partnership model for how a SFOD-A could potentially augment a CF BN in this scenario.

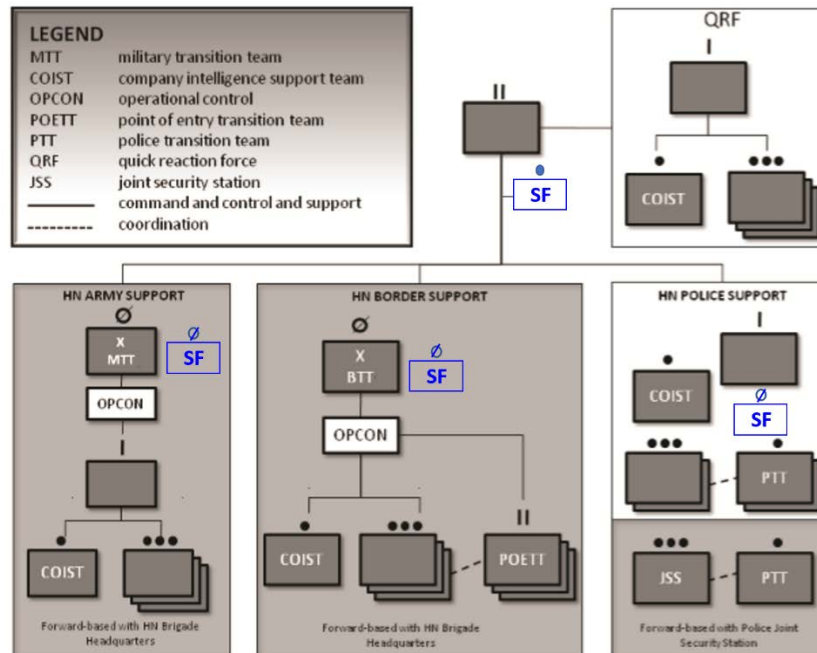


Figure 11. Hypothetical Partnership Model–SOF assist CF

Source: Department of the Arm, Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 4-11; modified by author.

In this model, an SFOD-A is attached to a CF BN conducting SFA, and augments each of the battalion's three advisory efforts with a 2 to 3-man advisor augmentation team. CF have the lead in this circumstance; the SFOD-A provides assistance in terms of cultural awareness and requisite knowledge of the FSF, presumably from operational experience within the given state. The SFOD-A was selected as the advisory augmentation element of choice in this scenario due to its inherent flexibility and capability to function autonomously. This hypothetical assistance to CF advisors is low impact and requires minimal outside support for the embedded SF "advisors to the advisors." As with the scenario in the previous section, confliction points still exist. As previously discussed, many of these confliction points could potentially revolve around

command relationships, as the SF element in country may have supplementary taskings as part of a broader SOF effort in that particular state. Regardless, as with the first discussion point, institutionalizing I3 and prior combined training between the involved CFs and SOF elements would accomplish much in assuaging these potential misunderstandings. As a final point, commensurate with the previous recommendation, the concept of combined advisory efforts might be simple in pretext but more complex in execution. It is to that point the research concludes with a final note on combined preparation to develop the requisite relationships, which will facilitate successful SFA efforts:

[P]ursuing true interdependence is a strategy that will lay the ground work for both greater combat readiness and lead to success on the battlefields of the future. We must move beyond all parochial opinions about tactics that we think will lead to future success inside our own narrow warfighting communities to develop a sustainable strategy from which those future victories will evolve – a strategy that routinely brings us together on the training field before we step onto the next battlefield. (Fenzel and Lock 2015, 32)

#### The Gray Zone in Design: Social Theory as a SFA Stratagem

The final recommendation for this study revolves around devising a different strategic formula for addressing the complicated nature of SFA environments. As discussed throughout this study, the USG faces a spectrum of challenges in a variety of multifaceted geo-political environments that are simply described as complex and volatile. These challenges range in complication from region to region and across time and space. For military planners, the challenge lies not within devising an approach method to address kinetic issues in high intensity conflicts. Indeed, few militaries in the world can systematically dismantle a belligerent party's military arm with such efficiency. The issue lies in putting the system back together, or in SFA environments,

preventing the system from falling apart in the first place. When the key terrain transitions from geographic landscape to anthro-topography, and achieving a relative advantage shifts from the physical to human domain, how do we properly frame the problem to develop an operational approach?

Operational Design is defined as “the conception and construction of the framework that underpins a campaign or major operational plan and its subsequent execution” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2011b, GL-13). The purpose of Operational Design, in conjunction with Operational Art, is to “provide a bridge between strategy and tactics, linking national strategic aims to tactical combat and noncombat operations that must be executed to accomplish these aims” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2011b, III-1). More granularly defined as a framework of frameworks, “Design” provides military planners the perspective based tools to look at a problem set from a variety of angles to ensure the operational approach balances ends, ways, and means with risk to accomplish an endstate. Elements of operational design including center of gravity (COG) analysis (COG), decisive points, lines of operation—effort, and objectives. As outlined by U.S. military doctrine, Design and “Art” provide excellent methods of analysis for combatting corporeal adversaries that CF are organizationally designed and trained to face. Few critiques of the existing frameworks within Design and Art have been published, despite the fact existing doctrinal frameworks have done little to explain the amount of American blood and treasure expended in a 16-year War on Terror, when the conflict arguably began with a “home by Christmas” mentality in the early 2000s. The issue is largely due to the nature in which these frameworks, including COG analysis, attempt to categorize the problem. Questions arise when the adversary we face lacks physical form. Paradigms



including simplifying a conflict zone as a boxing ring or a football field, even flippantly, betray our bias that an adversary will fight on our terms. What happens when that enemy will do everything in his power to not set foot on the playing field? How do we devise strategy against those who see the conflict zone not as the boxing ring but rather the bleachers, the locker room, and the road from your house to the stadium? Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege, founding director of the School for Advanced Military Studies, offers a supporting critique for our current strategic planning challenges, stating that organizationally the U.S. Military “do[es] not take the inherent complexity or dynamism of most mission situations sufficiently into account, and they apply a linear planning logic to situations when such logic does not apply—reasoning from ends to ways to means” (Wass de Czege 2011, 48). Wass de Czege is by no means critiquing the Design process, but rather the perspectives and frameworks through which we view and categorize a specific problem. The official introduction of Design into military doctrine in 2009 marked a new advent in innovational thinking. When facing a social problem where the adversary is vaporous or intangible, we require a different framework that steers our creative and critical thinking away from the *status quo* “us vs. them” binary relationship, which pigeon-holes our strategy into attacking a symptom as opposed to a complex system of problems. If the issue in our thinking is not the Design process but rather the frameworks in which we approach the problem, what tools can we apply to address complicated and interrelated issues where a relative advantage is essential in the “human domain?”

Social theory emerges as a potentially relevant perspective, through which both SOF and conventional planners can view the scope of a problem and apply the tenants of

Design to develop a feasible operational approach. Especially in circumstances where lethal operations are not an option, or the adversarial relationship is not defined or irrelevant, social theory provides a mechanism to categorize and define complex systems issues within a society. When examining the benefit of applying the social theory perspective in certain conditions, as opposed to traditional COG analysis, several distinct advantages materialize. First, social theory views phenomena within a social framework as a series of interrelated systems. As opposed to the conventionally linear framework of critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities within COG analysis; social theory views each category as interrelated, interdependent, and symbiotic. Comparable to the anatomy and systems of the human body, society and human behavior comprises an array of synergetic social phenomena that can be categorized and framed. In the explanation of what social theory would classify as deviant behavior, especially on a macro level in the form of violent factions, crime, insurgency, etc.; an additional comparison to human anatomy is helpful to explain. If an individual is sick, rarely is one particular issue causing the illness. Rather, a dysfunctional system of systems is at work, contributing to the individual's ailments. For example, if a subject is suffering from kidney failure, typically other organs in other systems including the liver, pancreas, and heart begin to either contribute to the problem, or create other problems on their own. High blood pressure sets in, putting strain on a variety of anatomical systems. Insulin levels skyrocket, creating mood swings and causing obesity issues. Low kidney function contributes to Vitamin D deficiency, placing further pressure on the affected systems. The risk inherent in applying linear thought and unilateral treatment to any one symptom without viewing the problem holistically should be common sense. Not treating the high

blood pressure could cause the cardiovascular system to fail. However, what if the blood pressure medicine has an adverse reaction on the pancreas, placing additional pressure on the gastro-intestinal system? Instead, it is critical to address the spectrum of issues with a spectrum of solutions. Keeping in mind the potential that a remedy for one problem may exacerbate another interrelated problem. As in the human body, the same argument applies for complex social issues and developing an approach strategy to remedy a dysfunctional system of systems.

Social theory, comparable to the Design process, comprises its own framework of frameworks. For purposes of the argument in utilizing social theory as a perspective framework in Design, the two fundamental sub-theories of structure functionalism and conflict theory provide relevance to military planners. Both schools of thought sit at opposite ends of the social theory spectrum. However, while one theory may apply more in one strategic situation, typically in the explanation of social phenomena elements of both theories apply. Conflict theory, succinctly described, is the “view that social phenomena of the past, present, and future is a result of conflict” (Theodorsen and Theodorsen 1969, 71). Conflict theorists typically hold the viewpoint that “all human societies contain lines of cleavage, categories of individuals with distinct and at least partially opposed interests” (Garner, Hancock, and Budrys 2013, 11). Prominent conflict theorists including Max Weber and Friedrich Engels postulated that such “lines of cleavage” exist in various concentric circles within a society and across cultures to include classes (haves vs. have-nots), religious differences, political ideologies, and gender. These “conflicts,” in turn, cause societies to exist, evolve, and innovate as various subgroups compete for dominance in any one of the aforementioned areas. Relevant to

the military strategist, conflict theory visualizes dysfunctional social phenomena as a volatile molecular reaction, as one group's actions towards another will elicit an equal or greater counter reaction. Structure functionalism, in comparison, is "the analysis of social and cultural phenomena in terms of the functions they perform in a sociocultural system" (Theodorsen and Theodorsen 1969, 167). Also referred to as the "organism model," functionalism views social phenomena as interrelated and complementary. Operating much like a machine, functionalists see society as comprised of smaller, interworking mechanisms that make up the greater whole. In terms of the value this theory provides to military strategy in SFA, functionalism affords the perspective of how systems exacerbate each other within a dysfunctional model. When mapped out as part of a Design process, both theories contribute to visualization, which allows the application and arrangement of activities across the range of military operations in time and space.

The question now lies as to when and where the application of social theory serves as a relevant perspective in devising SFA strategy, as opposed to COG analysis. Largely kinetic issues including transitional difficulties in Afghanistan and the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq continually contest U.S. policy and military strategy. While elements of social theory may prove useful in these circumstances, the volatile nature of these socio-political environments indicate these "societies" remain in flux, and therefore require steady pressure in a kinetic sense until a more concrete form of social organization emerges. In comparison, low intensity conflicts including gang violence in Central America, instability in North Africa, and factional competition in Yemen present challenges to military planners that traditional application of Design frameworks prove problematic in explaining. Similar circumstances where social organizations remain

generally intact, yet dysfunctional, provide a unique problem-set that share a general commonality. This consists of the largely unexplained human domain in American military doctrine, where people have evolved into key terrain and maneuver largely lies within the narrative and cognitive spaces.

For purposes of the argument, an examination of social instability within El Salvador serves as an example of how to apply social theory through the principles of Design. The most overt kinetic problem in this scenario consists of gang violence throughout the country, which threatens the Government of El Salvador's ability to provide for the well-being of its people. In this scenario, traditional COG analysis would generally lead most planners into believing the gangs are the problem. This, in turn, would establish a binary adversarial relationship that hinders a holistic view of the issue to determine a different operational approach. A deeper dive into the El Salvadoran plight indicates the situation is viewable as either a series of competing interactions in a greater social phenomenon (Conflict Theory) or as a dysfunctional system of systems (Functionalism). Concerning the most overt problem, two main factions including the MS-13 and Barrio 18 gangs perpetrate most of the violent activity. These gangs originated in the U.S. among expatriate communities fleeing from the El Salvadoran Civil War in the 1980s. Both groups evolved from a bid for survival in a foreign land with a hostile socio-political environment and exploited a gap in the expatriate social fabric by providing a neo-family structure for disenfranchised youth seeking better opportunities and a greater sense of purpose. Repatriated to El Salvador through mass deportation, gang members now control much of the urban terrain, and extort small business owners in a "pay-for-play" criminal subsistence economic model. Plagued by internal corruption,

the Government of El Salvador has unsuccessfully fluctuated between legitimize or brutalize solution tactics, further isolating gang members and affected communities. But unlike the Mexican Cartels of the region, which popular culture portrays through conjuring images of lavish haciendas, exotic cars, and extravagant lifestyles; El Salvadoran gang leadership is comparatively impoverished. Described as “mafias of the poor,” El Salvadoran gangs extort money which is recycled back into the community for civil services, filling a gap that the Government of El Salvador has largely been unable to fill. Gang organization is comprised of semi-autonomous “cliques” spread throughout urban and rural zones. Comprised mainly of teenagers, cliques arguably replace families as a coherent support structure for young people whose outlook on life consists of either jail or the cemetery.

As viewed through the perspective of social theory, there is much more going on than just gang activity, and approaching this situation from a kinetic standpoint could potentially destabilize El Salvador even further. Using either sample theories, both functionalism and conflict theory enable military planners through asking a series of questions that broaden the optic on the situation. Instead of COG analysis, which funnels planners into viewing the issue in binary terms, identify the true problem. What does the problem need to work? What does the problem need to functionally continue, or cease to react? As human behavior is largely viewed as symptomatic of a process as opposed to the most overt issue in social theory, moving away from listing organizations as “the problem” will provide a different viewpoint of the situation. As part of a Design process, functionalism maps out this situation like a machine, consisting of a series of interrelated smaller machines that interlock and cause the problem to “work.” Social theory focuses

more on intangible concepts, in this circumstance the problem is hypothetically defined as “lack of Government of El Salvador relevance.” Within this problem, several sub-problems (critical capabilities of the problem) contribute to the dysfunctional system’s process including gang violence, governmental corruption, high crime, and so on. Within the sub-problems, as indicated on the “teeth” of the gears in figure 12, several smaller problems (critical requirements of the problem) contribute to the machine’s functionality.

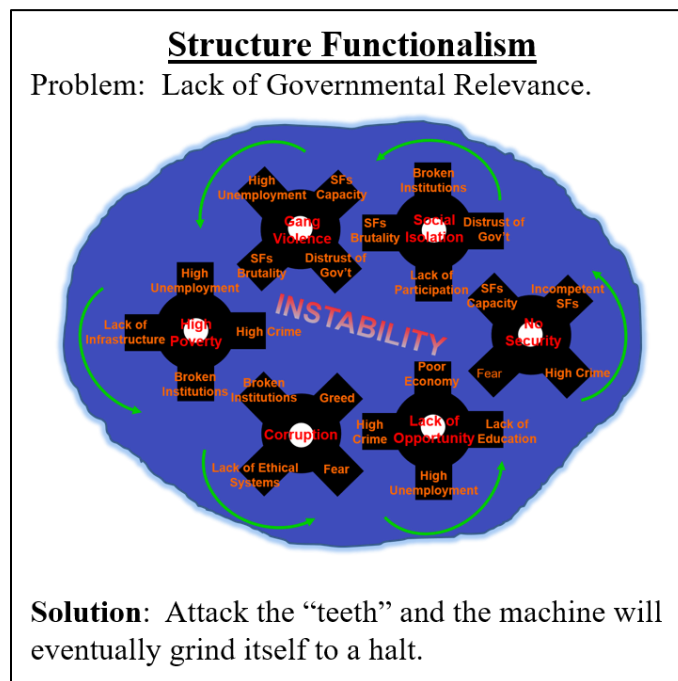


Figure 12. Structure Functionalism as a Design Perspective

*Source:* Created by author.

Developing an operational approach at this juncture consists of “attacking the teeth” of the gears using tools and programs in the DoD’s purview. Of note, while it is difficult to combat intangibles such as “greed” or “fear,” focusing on tangible problems

within the system such as “lack of infrastructure” or “lack of security force capacity” provides clarity that a dysfunctional system requires a spectrum of solutions.

Acknowledging the intangibles provides perspective and additional options for maneuvering within the human domain. An operational approach utilizing functionalism as a framing model aims to grind the “gears” down enough so, theoretically speaking, the system begins to glitch and slip on its own. Much like a transmission going out on an automobile, once the “gears” in the system begin to malfunction the rest of the machine will begin to either cease functioning, or evolve into something else.

In juxtaposition to functionalism, conflict theory as mapped out like a molecular reaction demonstrates the volatility of social phenomenon and how actions across cleavage lines create secondary and counter reactions within a greater phenomenon or social construct. Using the same problem description and variables, a conflict theory model shows the “cleavage lines” across sub-problems within the molecular reaction that is the lack of government relevance in El Salvador (see figure 13).



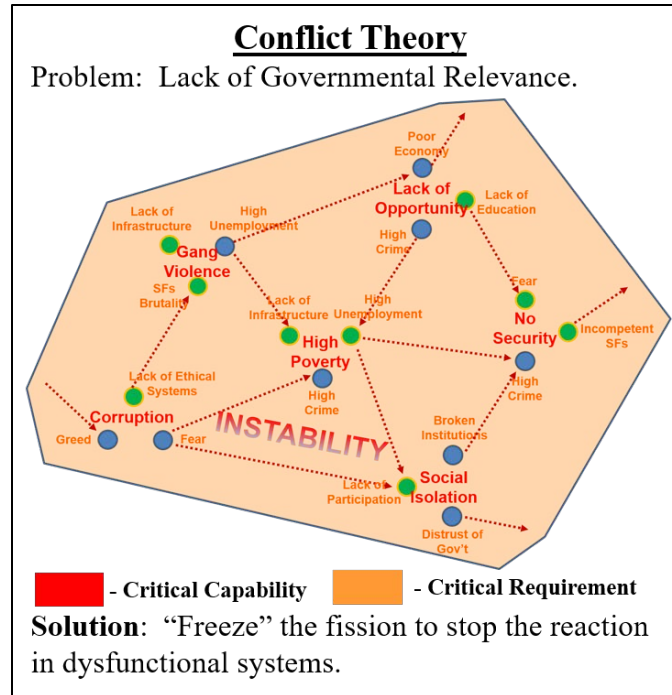


Figure 13. Conflict Theory as a Design Perspective

Source: Created by author.

Applying the same logic of attacking the critical requirements of the sub-problems within the reaction using DoD programs and capabilities will theoretically prevent additional sub-reactions from occurring and eventually slow the greater dysfunctional reaction down. As in the functionalism model, looking at the problem through the lens of conflict theory similarly demonstrates the need for a spectrum of solutions.

Regardless of intellectual discipline or background, social theory is not all encompassing; but it affords military planners an additional perspective based tool in devising strategy relevant to SFA environments. Social theory brings a unique perspective to the table of the Design process, applicable and relevant in certain

circumstances, while providing less relevance in others. Critics within the primary discipline of Sociology abound for both functionalism and conflict theory. The important aspect of this for both SOF and conventional planners is deciding on the relevance, understanding the scope, and determining the boundaries for what either social theory provides to the Design process in a particular circumstance. Perhaps the greatest value provided to the military planner is a function and a capacity to visualize and describe the largely ephemeral human domain, and the role that intangibles play in a complex situation. Arguably, that largely comprises the “what is” of social theory in a Design process, as opposed to what social theory “is not,” a temporal description and categorization of the traditional military corporeal adversary. Of which, in today’s volatile world, there appears to be less than the ill-defined and multifaceted geopolitical problem.

### Final Thoughts

In June of 2014, the specter of ISIS coalesced into corporeal form, crashing across Westphalian boundaries in their bid to establish the next caliphate across the Middle East. The preponderance of Iraqi security forces, who had received billions of dollars in equipment and training over the course of the American occupation from 2003 to 2011, fled during the onslaught. Leaving behind countless amounts of weaponry, armored vehicles, and even tanks, the Iraqi security forces buckled under the first, significant, outside threat they faced. The media depicted image after image of ISIS fighters parading around American equipment as they approached the suburbs of Baghdad.

Comparatively receiving little attention in the media, a similar scenario was unfolding in the small country of Lebanon, scarcely 500 miles away. An ISIS

expeditionary force with an estimated strength of 1,500 fighters had seized the town of Aarsal, in northeastern Lebanon, at the same time the extremists had seized Mosul in Iraq. Rather than run, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), who were outfitted with Vietnam-era U.S. military equipment, organized a combined conventional and SOF task force, and miraculously managed to expel the invaders after intense fighting over a two-week period. The U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group (A) had an embedded SF Advanced Operations Base, which had persistently trained the LAF over a period of seven years prior to that juncture. After expelling the ISIS fighters from Lebanon, LTG Jean Kahwaji (LAF CDR) candidly remarked, "If not for the training provided by U.S. Special Forces, all would have been lost!"

The point of this anecdote, which the researcher experienced personally in Beirut, is not to beat the proverbial drum concerning the quality of training provided by SOF versus CF. As previously argued in this study, not everyone can be an effective advisor, but rather an effective advisor can come from anywhere. Indeed, U.S. Special Forces had invested considerably more capacity building effort in Iraq as opposed to Lebanon. However, the Iraq as contrasted to Lebanon dichotomy provides valuable operational context to the main points of this research. No matter the investment, SFA and related capacity building programs are not guaranteed to work everywhere. However, trends and potentials exist, which renders the environmental conditions perceivable for when a judicious application of American man-power and resources will achieve a desired effect. The ethical questions this undoubtedly raises is posited to policy makers: "If a country is too far gone, is it worth the investment of American blood and treasure?" Such questions transcend beyond the scope of this study, however one might assert that if greater unity of

effort between SOF and CF in building Iraqi security forces capacity had occurred prior to the breach, than perhaps we might be facing a different scenario in the Middle East today.

While the previous statement could be dismissed as circumstantial conjecture, the true main point of this research is not. Further conversation and institutionalization of SOF and CF I3 must occur as a strategic countermeasure to address the threats of the future. There can be no other conclusion than the simple pretext that “we” as a combined force, are truly “better together.” “If there is one thing the last 13 years of continuous combat operations has achieved, it is to break down the barriers between SOF/CF communities, unite our tactical and operational efforts, and create a healthy environment of interdependence on the battlefield” (Fenzel and Lock 2015, 32). As military professionals, we owe through our commitment to the American People and our Soldiers the requisite critical thought and intellectual self-cognizance to determine when a particular approach requires a shift to improve both efficiency and the odds of operational success. It is in earnest desire that this study serves as an additional stepping stone towards that end. Indeed, our adversaries will not stand idly by while we mull our own evolution.

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